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ENGLISH
SONNETS

COLLECTED AND ARRANGED BY

JOHN DENNIS

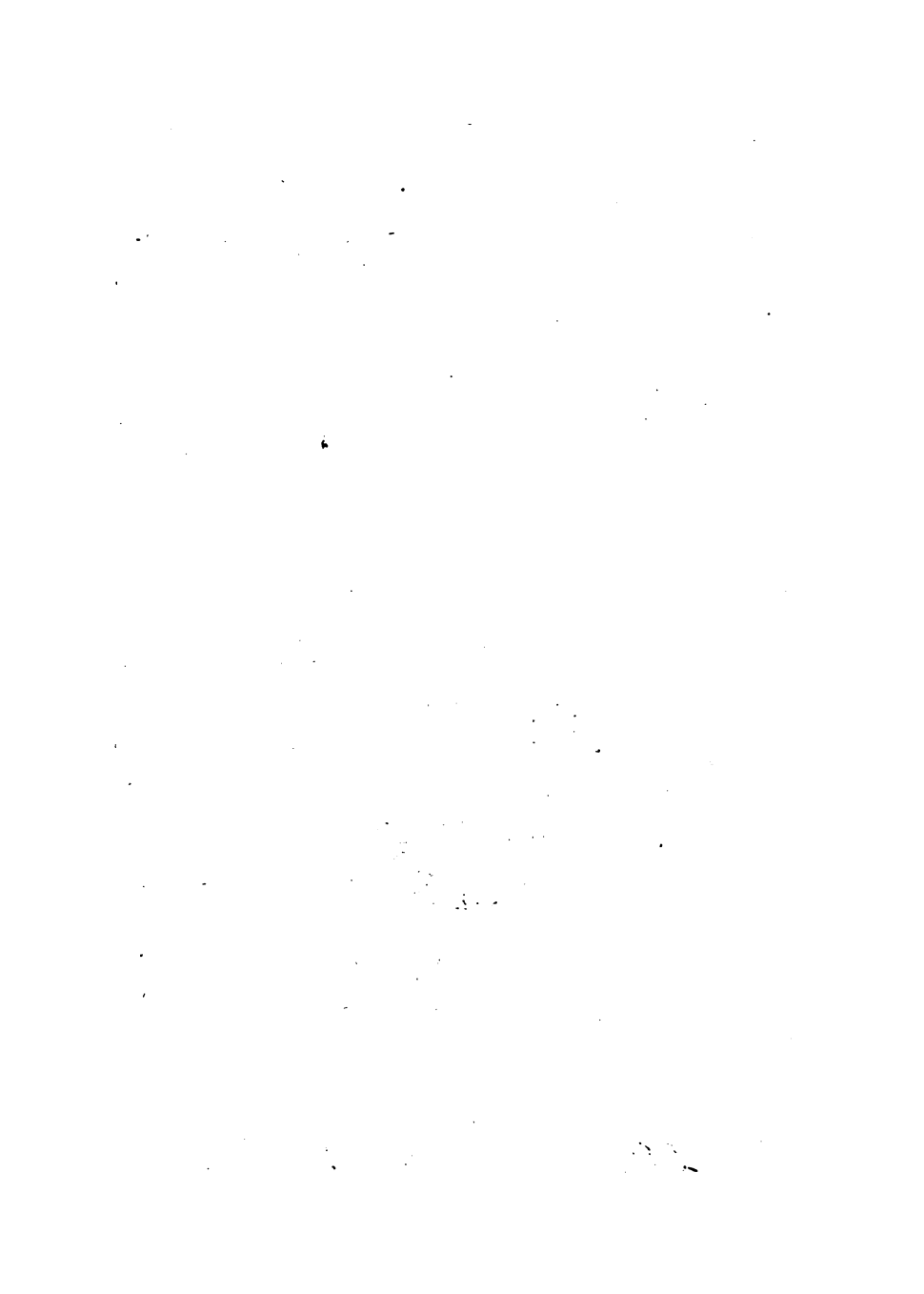




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ENGLISH SONNETS.



ENGLISH SONNETS.

A Selection.

EDITED BY

JOHN DENNIS.



LONDON:

HENRY S. KING & CO.,

65, CORNHILL, AND 12, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1873.

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TO

JOHN WILLIAM INCHBOLD.

TO you who have so dear a love of the Sonnet, and have sometimes so happily employed it in moments of release from professional labour, I gladly and affectionately dedicate this little volume. And I do this the more readily, because all that is most worthy in it comes from the noble masters of English verse, who impart to us, although in different language, the same joy-inspiring lessons which our great artists teach upon canvas.

J. D.

PREFACE.

THIS selection of Sonnets is designed for the student of poetry ; not for the reader who takes up a volume of verse in order to pass away an idle hour. A beautiful song gladdens the ear at once, a noble ode, or a pathetic ballad, sends the blood bounding or brings tears to the eyes, and a great drama affords to the mind infinite delight even upon a first perusal ; but "the sonnet is a form of poetry, in which style is put under high pressure," and the wealth it contains is rarely to be won without toil. Condensation of thought, exactitude of language, and unity of design are demanded of the sonnet writer, and through his fourteen lines, and knitting them together, must run the golden thread of poetry. Perfection in this most difficult branch of the poetic art is of course not easily attained, and even in this little volume several Sonnets will be found whose intrinsic value is comparatively slight, although from association, or from other causes, they possess a literary interest.

It will be observed that the names of living writers

are not included in the list. It is difficult to judge wisely, it is scarcely possible to judge impartially, of the works of men whose presence is perhaps familiar, and whose poetry is associated with the charm of personal intercourse. And even when this link is wanting, the rigid estimate of the critic can scarcely be given to works which, as it were, belong to ourselves and form a part of our lives. The contemporary poet may or may not be a greater poet than one of his predecessors, who belongs to the crowned kings of poesy, but it is probable that his influence over us will be more penetrating. He speaks the language of the age, knows the thoughts of the age, takes his share in it, and belongs to it even while rising above it. Some of his popularity is therefore due to temporary causes, and he must be a rash man or a consummate critic who shall venture to say how much of the living poet's work is fulfilling a passing service, and how much of it is destined to an enduring life.

There are two selections of English verse, and, as far as the Editor knows, two only which will thoroughly satisfy the student and lover of poetry. One is Mr. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury of Songs and*

Lyrics, a little volume which it may be safely said will prove a joy to future generations as well as to our own : the other, less known, perhaps, but scarcely less precious, is Archbishop Trench's *Household Book of English Poetry*. The patient labour expended on these anthologies will be as evident to any one who has toiled in the same field, as the fine taste and judgment of which every reader of culture must be conscious. The range covered by these selections is far wider than that now chosen. Variety, which gives a zest to life, also adds to the charm of poetry, and a book which consists wholly of Sonnets cannot boast the attraction of volumes which embrace almost every class of poetry save the epic and the dramatic. And yet there are reasons, perhaps, why the Editor may hope without presumption, to secure a place for this collection, on the shelf which holds the two admirable volumes edited by Archbishop Trench and by Mr. Palgrave.

Archbishop Trench has well said that "poems of the highest order are in their very essence sources of a delight which is inexhaustible." This delight is afforded in no stinted measure by the Sonnet, which concentrates within a narrow space such rare and

often peerless beauty. A Sonnet, brief though it be, is of wide compass, and contains, to use the words of Marlowe, infinite riches in a little room. What depth of emotion, what graceful fancy, what majestic organ-notes, what soft flute-like music is it not capable of expressing !

It may be admitted that no one will care to read many Sonnets successively. They must be studied at intervals, thoughtfully and without haste. A collection of really fine Sonnets therefore, a collection containing, we believe, the noblest Sonnets in the language, with the exception of those (and what an exception it is !) written by living poets, though it can never interest the multitude, should have a strong claim on the regard of thoughtful readers of poetry. They are not likely to throw it aside after a careless glance, but will rather, let us hope, turn to it again and yet again, for solace and delight. To make the anthology worthy of such students, no trouble has been spared. The labour of editorial work like this is not evident to the casual reader, since the heaviest portion of it leaves no mark upon the page. Very bad sonnets are easily rejected, very good sonnets

easily chosen, but the poems of doubtful value are infinitely more numerous than either, and these often require to be read and re-read before a decision respecting them can be arrived at.

A word or two may be added on the arrangement of the volume. The poet sonneteers follow each other in chronological order, and although their poems cover a period of three centuries it has been judged best to adhere throughout to modern orthography. In the earliest period of our literary history the growth of the language may be traced in the archaisms of our authors, and in later times the quaint spelling must be sometimes preferred for the sake of the rhyme or metre, but with these exceptions, there seems no reason for retaining obsolete spelling. Indeed every one familiar with the Elizabethan dramatists and poets, will know that spelling was but lightly regarded by them, and that the same word often appears in different forms upon the same page. It has been well said that "what is called 'modern spelling' is in fact not so much an alteration of the old spelling as a reduction to uniformity which obviates numberless misinterpretations. Hardly a word can be found

which was not in old days occasionally spelt as we spell it now." But if the student of language will gain nothing by a reproduction of antique spelling, the student of poetry is likely to lose a large share of his enjoyment. The adoption of modern spelling has been followed by the first of modern editors, by Messrs. Clark and Wright in the Cambridge Shakespeare, by Mr. Christie generally in the Globe Dryden, and by Mr. Elwin in his fine edition of Pope—a poet, by the way, who was as indifferent about his spelling as he was careful in the verbal niceties of his art.

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ENGLISH SONNETS.



A VOW TO LOVE FAITHFULLY.

EARL OF
SURREY.

516?—1547.

SET me whereas the sun doth parch the green,
Or where his beams do not dissolve the ice ;
In temperate heat, where he is felt and seen ;
In presence prest of people mad or wise ;
Set me in high, or yet in low degree ;
In longest night, or in the shortest day ;
In clearest sky, or where clouds thickest be ;
In lusty youth, or when my hairs are gray :
Set me in heaven, in earth, or else in hell,
In hill or dale, or in the foaming flood ;
Thrall, or at large, alive whereso I dwell,
Sick or in health, in evil fame or good,
Hers will I be ; and only with this thought
Content myself, although my chance be nought.

SARDANAPALUS.

EARL OF
SURREY.

1516?—1547.

TH' Assyrian King, in peace, with foul desire
And filthy lusts that stained his regal heart ;
In war, that should set princely hearts on fire,
Did yield, vanquisht for want of martial art.
The dint of swords from kisses seemèd strange ;
And harder than his lady's side, his targe ;
From glutton feasts to soldier's fare, a change ;
His helmet, far above a garland's charge :
Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,
Drenchèd in sloth and womanish delight,
Feeble of spirit, impatient of pain,
When he had lost his honour and his right,
(Proud time of wealth, in storms appalled with dread,)
Murdered himself, to show some manful deed.

SPRING.

EARL OF
SURREY.
1516?—1547.

THE soote season that bud and bloom forth brings,
With green hath clad the hill, and eke the vale,
The nightingale with feathers new she sings ;
The turtle to her make hath told her tale.
Summer is come, for every spray now springs,
The hart hath hung his old head on the pale ;
The buck in brake his winter coat he flings ;
The fishes flete with new repaired scale ;
The adder all her slough away she slings ;
The swift swallow pursueth the flies smale ;
The busy bee her honey now she mings ;
Winter is worn that was the flowers' bale.
And thus I see among these pleasant things
Each care decays, and yet my sorrow springs !

TO SLEEP.

SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY.
—
1554—1586.

COME Sleep, O Sleep ! the certain knot of peace,
The baiting place of wit, the balm of woe,
The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
The indifferent Judge between the high and low ;
With shield of proof shield me from out the prease
Of those fierce darts Despair at me doth throw.
Oh ! make in me those civil wars to cease ;
I will good tribute pay if thou do so.
Take thou of me smooth pillows, sweetest bed,
A chamber deaf to noise and blind to light,
A rosy garland and a weary head :
And if these things, as being thine by right,
Move not thy heavy grace, thou shalt in me
Livelier than elsewhere Stella's image see.

THE SOURCE OF FAME.

SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY.
—
554—1586.

You that do search for every purling spring,
Which from the ribs of old Parnassus flows,
And every flower, not sweet perhaps, which grows
Near thereabouts, into your posy wring ;
You that do dictionaries' method bring
Into your rhymes, running in rattling rows ;
You that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes
With new-born sighs and wit disguisèd sing ;
You take wrong ways : those far-fetched helps be such
As do bewray a want of inward touch :
And sure at length stolen goods do come to light.
But if, both for your love and skill, your name
You seek to nurse at fullest breasts of fame,
Stella behold, and then begin t' endite.

HIS DEBT TO STELLA.

SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY.

1554—1586.

HAVING this day my horse, my hand, my lance
Guided so well that I obtained the prize,
Both by the judgment of the English eyes
And of some sent from that sweet enemy, France ;
Horsemen my skill in horsemanship advance ;
Townfolks my strength ; a daintier judge applies
His praise to sleight, which from good use doth rise ;
Some lucky wits impute it but to chance ;
Others, because of both sides I do take
My blood from them who did excel in this,
Think Nature me a man of arms did make.
How far they shot awry ! The true cause is,
Stella looked on ; and from her heavenly face
Sent forth the beams which made so fair my race.

TO THE MOON.

PHILIP
EV.
—
1586.

With how sad steps, O Moon ! thou climb'st the skies,

How silently, and with how wan a face !

What ! may it be, that even in heavenly place

That busy Archer his sharp arrows tries ?

Sure, if that long with love-acquainted eyes

Can judge of love, thou feel'st a lover's case ;

I read it in thy looks, thy languished grace

To me that feel the like thy state describes.

Then, even of fellowship, O Moon ! tell me,

Is constant love deemed there but want of wit ?

Are beauties there as proud as here they be ?

Do they above love to be loved, and yet

Those lovers scorn whom that love doth possess ?

Do they call virtue there ungratefulness ?

HIS MISTRESS ASLEEP.

THOMAS
WATSON.

1560—1592.

I SAW the object of my pining thought,
Within a garden of sweet Nature's placing :
Wherein an arbour artificial wrought,
By workman's wondrous skill the garden gracing,
Did boast his glory, glory far renowned,
For in his shady boughs my Mistress slept :
And with a garland of his branches crowned,
Her dainty forehead from the sun ykept.
Imperious love upon her eyelids tending,
Playing his wanton sports at every beck,
And into every finest limb descending,
From eyes to lips from lips to ivory neck.
And every limb supplied and t' every part
Had free access but durst not touch her heart.

HIS LADY'S PRIDE.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552—1599.

RUDELY thou wrongest my dear heart's desire,
In finding fault with her too portly pride ;
The thing which I do most in her admire,
Is of the world unworthy most envied ;
For in those lofty looks is close implied
Scorn of base things, and sdeign of foul dishonour
Threatening rash eyes which gaze on her so wide,
That loosely they ne dare to look upon her,
Such pride is praise, such portliness is honour ;
That boldness innocence bears in her eyes ;
And her fair countenance, like a goodly banner,
Spreads in defiance of all enemies.
Was never in this world ought worthy tried
Without some spark of such self-pleasing pride.

HIS LADY'S EYES.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552—1599.

ONE day as I unwarily did gaze
On those fair eyes, my Love's immortal light,
The whiles my 'stonished heart stood in amaze,
Through sweet illusion of her looks' delight,
I might perceive how in her glancing sight,
Legions of loves with little wings did fly
Darting their deadly arrows fiery bright,
At every rash beholder passing by.
One of those archers closely I did spy,
Aiming his arrow at my very heart ;
When suddenly with twinkle of her eye
The Damsel broke his misintended dart.
Had she not so done, sure I had been slain,
Yet as it was I hardly 'scaped with pain.

HIS LADY'S FACE.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552—1599.

THE glorious portrait of that Angel's face
 Made to amaze weak men's confused skill,
 And this world's worthless glory to embase ;
 What pen, what pencil, can express her fill ?
 For though he colours could devise at will,
 And eke his learned hand at pleasure guide,
 Lest, trembling, it his workmanship should spill,
 Yet many wondrous things there are beside ;
 The sweet eye-glances that like arrows glide ;
 The charming smiles that rob sense from the heart ;
 The lovely pleasance, and the lofty pride
 Cannot expressèd be by any art.
 A greater craftsman's hand thereto doth need
 That can express the life of things indeed.

HIS LADY'S HAIR.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552—1596.

WHAT guile is this, that those her golden tresses
She doth attire under a net of gold ;
And with sly skill so cunningly them dresses,
That which is gold or hair may scarce be told ?
Is it that men's frail eyes which gaze too bold,
She may entangle in that golden snare ;
And being caught may craftily enfold
Their weaker hearts which are not well aware ?
Take heed therefore mine eyes how ye do stare
Henceforth too rashly on that guileful net,
In which if ever ye entrappèd are,
Out of her bands ye by no means shall get.
Fondness it were for any, being free,
To covet fetters, though they golden be !

HIS LADY'S SCORN OF BASE THINGS.

EDMUND
SPENSER
1552—1599.

THE glorious image of the Maker's beauty,
My sovereign saint, the idol of my thought,
Dare not henceforth above the bounds of duty
T' accuse of pride or rashly blame for aught.
For being as she is, divinely wrought
And of the brood of Angels heavenly born,
And with the crew of blessed saints upbrought,
Each of which did her with their gifts adorn ;
The bud of joy, the blossom of the morn,
The beam of light whom mortal eyes admire ;
What reason is it then but she should scorn
Base things, that to her love too bold aspire !
Such heavenly forms ought rather worshipped be,
Than dare be loved by men of mean degree.

HIS LADY FEARS THE LOSS OF LIBERTY.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552-1599.

THE doubt which ye misdeem, fair Love is vain,
That fondly fear to lose your liberty ;
When losing one, two liberties ye gain
And make him bound that bondage erst did fly.
Sweet be the bands the which true love doth tie
Without constraint or dread of any ill ;
The gentle bird feels no captivity
Within her cage ; but sings, and feeds her fill ;
There pride dare not approach nor discord spill
The league 'twixt them that loyal love hath bound,
But simple truth and mutual good-will
Seeks with sweet peace to salve each other's wound,
There Faith doth fearless dwell in brasen tower,
And spotless Pleasure builds her sacred bower.

WILLING BONDAGE.

EDMUND
SPENSER.
1552—1599.


LIKE as a huntsman after weary chase
Seeing the game from him escaped away
Sits down to rest him in some shady place
With panting hounds beguiled of their prey ;—
So, after long pursuit and vain assay,
When I all weary had the chase forsook,
The gentle deer returned the self-same way
Thinking to quench her thirst at the next brook :
There she beholding me with milder look,
Sought not to fly, but fearless still did bide ;
Till I in hand her yet half trembling took
And with her own good-will her firmly tied ;
Strange thing, meseemed, to see a beast so wild
So goodly won, with her own will beguiled.

THE LESSON OF LOVE.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

552—1599.

Most glorious Lord of life ! that on this day,
Didst make thy triumph over death and sin,
And having harrowed hell didst bring away
Captivity thence captive us to win :
This joyous day, dear Lord, with joy begin ;
And grant that we, for whom thou diddest die
Being with thy dear blood clean washed from sin
May live for ever in felicity :
And that thy love we weighing worthily,
May likewise love thee for the same again ;
And for thy sake, that all like dear didst buy,
With love may one another entertain !
So let us love, dear Love, like as we ought ;
Love is the lesson which the Lord us taught.



HIS LADY SHALL LIVE BY FAME.

EDMUND
SPENSER.

1552—1599.

ONE day I wrote her name upon the strand ;
 But came the waves and washèd it away :
 Again I wrote it with a second hand,
 But came the tide and made my pains his prey.
 Vain man ! said she, that dost in vain assay
 A mortal thing so to immortalize ;
 For I myself shall like to this decay,
 And eke my name be wipèd out likewise.
 Not so, quoth I ; let baser things devise
 To die in dust, but you shall live by fame :
 My verse your virtues fair shall éternize,
 And in the heavens write your glorious name.
 Where, whenas death shall all the world subdue,
 Our love shall live and later life renew.

HIS LADY'S ABSENCE.

EDMUND
SPENSER.
1552—1599.

LIKE as the culver, on the barèd bough,
Sits mourning for the absence of her mate ;
And in her songs sends many a wishful vow
For his return that seems to linger late :
So I alone, now left disconsolate,
Mourn to myself the absence of my love,
And, wandering here and there all desolate,
Seek with my plaints to match that mournful dove.
Ne joy of ought that under heaven doth hove
Can comfort me, but her own joyous sight ;
Whose sweet aspect both God and man can move,
In her unspotted pleasance to delight.
Dark is my day, whiles her fair light I miss,
And dead my life that wants such lively bliss.

A VISION UPON THE FAËRY QUEEN.

SIR WALTER
RALEIGH.
1552—1618.

METHOUGHT I saw the grave where Laura lay,
Within that temple where the vestal flame
Was wont to burn ; and passing by that way
To see that buried dust of living fame,
Whose tomb fair Love and fairer Virtue kept,
All suddenly I saw the Faëry Queen :
At whose approach the soul of Petrarch wept ;
And from thenceforth those Graces were not seen,
For they this Queen attended ; in whose stead
Oblivion laid him down on Laura's hearse.
Hereat the hardest stones were seen to bleed,
And groans of buried ghosts the heavens did pierce,
Where Homer's spright did tremble all for grief,
And cursed the access of that celestial thief.

OF HIS MISTRESS :

UPON OCCASION OF A FRIEND OF HIS WHICH DISSUADED HIM FROM LOVING

HENRY
CONSTABLE.

Born 1555 ?

A FRIEND of mine moaning my helpless love,

Hoping, by killing hope, my love to slay ;

“ Let not,” quoth he, “ thy hope thy heart betray,

Impossible it is her heart to move.”

But, sith resolvèd love cannot remove

As long as thy divine perfections stay,

Thy godhead then he sought to take away :—

Dear ! seek revenge, and him a liar prove.

Gods only do impossibilities :

“ Impossible,” saith he, “ thy grace to gain ! ”

Show then the power of thy divinities,

By granting me thy favour to obtain :

So shall thy foe give to himself the lie,

A goddess thou shalt prove, and happy I.

OF HIS MISTRESS :

UPON OCCASION OF HER WALKING IN A GARDEN.

HENRY
CONSTABLE.

Born 1555 ?


My lady's presence makes the roses red,
Because to see her lips they blush for shame :
The lilies' leaves, for envy, pale became,
And her white hands in them this envy bred.
The marigold abroad her leaves doth spread,
Because the sun's and her power is the same ;
The violet of purple colour came,
Dyed with the blood she made my heart to shed.
In brief—all flowers from her their virtue take :
From her sweet breath their sweet smells do proceed,
The living heat which her eye-beams do make
Warmeth the ground, and quickeneth the seed.
The rain wherewith she watereth these flowers
Falls from mine eyes, which she dissolves in showers.

LOVE'S FOOD.

HENRY
CONSTABLE.

Born 1555 ?

PITY refusing my poor love to feed,
A beggar starved for want of help he lies,
And at your mouth, the door of beauty, cries—
That thence some alms of sweet grants may proceed.
But as he waiteth for some almes-deed
A cherry-tree before the door he spies—
“Oh dear !” quoth he, “two cherries may suffice,
Two only, life may save in this my need.”
But beggars can they nought but cherries eat ?
Pardon my Love, he is a goddess’ son,
And never feedeth but on dainty meat,
Else need he not to pine as he hath done :
For only the sweet fruit of this sweet tree
Can give food to my Love, and life to me.



LOVE'S CONSTANCY.

HENRY
NSTABLE,
1555.

NEEDS must I leave, and yet needs must I love ;

In vain my wit doth paint in verse my woe :

Disdain in thee despair in me doth show

How by my wit I do my folly prove.

All this my heart from love can never move ;

Love is not in my heart, no, lady, no :

My heart is love itself ; till I forego

My heart, I never can my love remove.

How shall I then leave love ? I do intend

Not to crave grace, but yet to wish it still ;

Not to praise thee, but beauty to commend,

And so by beauty's praise, praise thee I will.

For as my heart is love, love not in me,

So beauty thou—beauty is not in thee.

A LESSON TAUGHT BY MUSIC.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

MUSIC to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly?
Sweets with sweets war not, joy delights in joy.
Why lovest thou that which thou receivest not gladly,
Or else receivest with pleasure thine annoy?
If the true concord of well-tuned sounds,
By unions married, do offend thine ear,
They do but sweetly chide thee, who confounds
In singleness the parts that thou shouldst bear.
Mark how one string, sweet husband to another,
Strikes each in each by mutual ordering;
Resembling sire and child and happy mother,
Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing :
Whose speechless song, being many, seeming one,
Sings this to thee ;—"Thou single wilt prove none."

HOW TO LIVE TWICE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

Who will believe my verse in time to come,
If it were filled with your most high deserts?
Though yet, heaven knows, it is but as a tomb,
Which hides your life and shows not half your parts.
If I could write the beauty of your eyes
And in fresh numbers number all your graces,
The age to come would say, 'This poet lies;
Such heavenly touches ne'er touched earthly faces.'
So should my papers, yellowed with their age,
Be scorned, like old men of less truth than tongue;
And your true rights be termed a poet's rage
And stretchèd metre of an antique song:
But were some child of yours alive that time,
You should live twice;—in it and in my rhyme.

THE UNFADING PICTURE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

—
1564—1616.

SHALL I compare thee to a summer's day ?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate :

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date :

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimmed ;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimmed ;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade,

Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest ;

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou growest :

So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

NIGHT THOUGHTS.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

WEARY with toil, I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tired ;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expired :
For then my thoughts, from far where I abide,
Intend a zealous pilgrimage to thee,
And keep my drooping eyelids open wide,
Looking on darkness which the blind do see :
Save that my soul's imaginary sight
Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which, like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new.
Lo, thus, by day my limbs, by night my mind,
For thee and for myself no quiet find.

THE WEALTH OF LOVE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

WHEN in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,
Featured like him, like him with friends possessed,
Desiring this man's art, and that man's scope,
With what I most enjoy contented least ;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on Thee, and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate ;
For thy sweet love remembered such wealth brings
That then I scorn to change my state with kings.

A REMEDY · FOR SADNESS.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

WHEN to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste :
Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight :
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear Friend,
All losses are restored, and sorrows end.

A LOVER'S REQUEST.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

IF thou survive my well-contented day,
When that churl Death my bones with dust shall cover,
And shalt by fortune once more re-survey
These poor rude lines of thy deceased lover,
Compare them with the bettering of the time ;
And though they be outstripped by every pen,
Reserve them for my love, not for their rhyme,
Exceeded by the height of happier men.
O, then vouchsafe me but this loving thought :
“Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age,
A dearer birth than this his love had brought,
To march in ranks of better equipage :
But since he died, and poets better prove,
Theirs for their style I'll read, his for his love.”

SUNSHINE AND CLOUD.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

FULL many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy ;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide,
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace :
Even so my sun one early morn did shine,
With all-triumphant splendour on my brow ;
But out, alack ! he was but one hour mine,
The region cloud hath masked him from me now.
Yet him for this my love no whit disdaineth ;
Suns of the world may stain when heaven's sun
staineth.

THE TENTH MUSE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

How can my Muse want subject to invent,
While thou dost breathe, that pour'st into my verse
Thine own sweet argument, too excellent
For every vulgar paper to rehearse?
O, give thyself the thanks, if aught in me
Worthy perusal stand against thy sight;
For who's so dumb that cannot write to thee,
When thou thyself dost give invention light?
Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old nine, which rhymers invoke;
And he that calls on thee, let him bring forth
Eternal numbers to outlive long date.
If my slight Muse do please these curious days,
The pain be mine, but thine shall be the praise.

THE VITALITY OF TRUTH.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

O HOW much more doth beauty beauteous seem
By that sweet ornament which truth doth give !
The rose looks fair, but fairer we it deem
For that sweet odour which doth in it live.
The canker-blooms have full as deep a dye
As the perfumèd tincture of the roses,
Hang on such thorns, and play as wantonly
When summer's breath their maskèd buds discloses :
But, for their virtue only is their show,
They live unwooded, and unrespected fade ;
Die to themselves. Sweet roses do not so ;
Of their sweet deaths are sweetest odours made :
And so of you, beauteous and lovely youth,
When that shall fade, my verse distils your truth.

THE POET'S PRAISE IMMORTAL.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

NOT marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme ;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmeared with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth ; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity,
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

TIME POWERLESS AGAINST SONG.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

LIKE as the waves make towards the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to their end ;
Each changing place with that which goes before
In sequent toil all forwards do contend.
Nativity, once in the main of light,
Crawls to maturity, wherewith being crowned,
Crooked eclipses 'gainst his glory fight,
And Time that gave, doth now his gift confound.
Time doth transfix the flourish set on youth,
And delves the parallels in beauty's brow,
Feeds on the rarities of nature's truth,
And nothing stands but for his scythe to mow :
And yet to times in hope my verse shall stand,
Praising thy worth, despite his cruel hand.

NIGHT' WATCHES.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

Is it thy will, thy image should keep open
My heavy eyelids to the weary night ?
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
While shadows, like to thee, do mock my sight ?
Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home, into my deeds to pry ;
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
The scope and tenour of thy jealousy ?
O no ! thy love, though much, is not so great ;
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake ;
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake :
For thee watch I, whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
From me far off, with others all too near.

THE RAVAGES OF TIME.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

WHEN I have seen by Time's fell hand defaced
The rich-proud cost of outworn buried age ;
When sometime lofty towers I see down-razed,
And brass eternal slave to mortal rage ;
When I have seen the hungry ocean gain
Advantage on the kingdom of the shore,
And the firm soil win of the watery main,
Increasing store with loss and loss with store ;
When I have seen such interchange of state,
Or state itself confounded to decay ;
Ruin hath taught me thus to ruminate,—
That Time will come, and take my Love away.
This thought is as a death, which cannot choose
But weep to have that which it fears to lose.

HOW TO DEFEAT TIME.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

SINCE brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O, how shall summer's honey breath hold out
Against the wreckful siege of battering days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong, but Time decays?
O fearful meditation! where, alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?
Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back?
Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
O, none, unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my Love may still shine bright.

WEARINESS.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

TIRED with all these, for restful death I cry,
As, to behold desert a beggar born,
And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
And purest faith unhappily forsworn,
And gilded honour, shamefully misplaced,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgraced,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscalled simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill :
Tired with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.

UNSELFISH LOVE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Than you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell :
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it ; for I love you so,
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot,
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O, if, I say, you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,
But let your love even with my life decay ;
Lest the wise world should look into your moan,
And mock you with me after I am gone.

LIFE'S AUTUMN.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

THAT time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west ;
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou see'st the glowing of such fire,
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

THE OLD STORY.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

—
1564—1616.

WHY is my verse so barren of new pride,
So far from variation or quick change ?
Why, with the time do I not glance aside
To new-found methods and to compounds strange ?
Why write I still all one, ever the same,
And keep invention in a noted weed,
That every word doth almost tell my name,
Showing their birth and where they did proceed ?
O, know, sweet Love, I always write of you,
And you and love are still my argument ;
So all my best is dressing old words new,
Spending again what is already spent :
For as the sun is daily new and old,
So is my love still telling what is told.

FAREWELL !

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

FAREWELL ! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowest thy estimate :
The charter of thy worth gives thee releasing ;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting ?
And for that riches where is my deserving ?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thyself thou gavest, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gavest it, else mistaking ;
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgment making.
Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
In sleep, a king, but waking no such matter.

LOVE'S RICHES.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

SOME glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force ;
Some in their garments, though new-fangled ill ;
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse ;
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest :
But these particulars are not my measure ;
All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
Of more delight than hawks or horses be ;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast :
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
All this away, and me most wretched make.

LOVE'S HAPPINESS IMPERFECT.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

BUT do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assurèd mine ;
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine.
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end.
I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend.
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
O, what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die !
But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot ?
Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not :

THE ABSENT LOVE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

FROM you have I been absent in the spring,
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,
That heavy Saturn laughed and leaped with him.
Yet nor the lays of birds, nor the sweet smell
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,
Could make me any summer's story tell,
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grew :
Nor did I wonder at the lily's white,
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose ;
They were but sweet, but figures of delight,
Drawn after you ; you pattern of all those.
Yet seemed it winter still, and, you away,
As with your shadow I with these did play.

LOVE CONQUERS TIME.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

To me, fair Friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turned,
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burned,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
Ah ! yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceived ;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceived :
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred,—
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

THE FAIREST FAIR.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

WHEN in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights,
Then in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have expressed
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring ;
And, for they looked but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing :
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

TRUE LOVE UNCHANGEABLE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

LET me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove :
O, no ; it is an ever-fixèd mark,
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken ;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come :
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

THE COURSE OF LUST.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

1564—1616.

THE expense of spirit in a waste of shame
Is lust in action ; and till action, lust
Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust ;
Enjoyed no sooner, but despisèd straight ;
Past reason hunted ; and no sooner had
Past reason hated, as a swallowed bait,
On purpose laid to make the taker mad ;
Mad in pursuit, and in possession so ;
Had, having, and in quest to have, extreme ;
A bliss in proof—and proved, a very woe ;
Before, a joy proposed ; behind, a dream :
All this the world well knows ; yet none knows well
To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell.

HOPE AGAINST HOPE.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.
—
1564—1616.

O, CALL not me to justify the wrong
That thy unkindness lays upon my heart ;
Wound me not with thine eye but with thy tongue ;
Use power with power and slay me not by art.
Tell me thou lovest elsewhere ; but in my sight,
Dear heart, forbear to glance thine eye aside :
What need'st thou wound with cunning, when thy might
Is more than my o'erpressed defence can 'bide ?
Let me excuse thee : ah ! my love well knows
Her pretty looks have been mine enemies,
And therefore from my face she turns my foes,
That they elsewhere might dart their injuries :
Yet do not so ; but since I am near slain,
Kill me outright with looks and rid my pain.

HOW TO CONQUER DEATH.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

—
1564—1616.

POOR soul, the centre of my sinful earth,
Fooled by these rebel powers that thee array,
Why dost thou pine within, and suffer dearth,
Painting thy outward walls so costly gay?
Why so large cost, having so short a lease,
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?
Shall worms, inheritors of this excess,
Eat up thy charge? is this thy body's end?
Then, soul, live thou upon thy servant's loss,
And let that pine to aggravate thy store;
Buy terms divine in selling hours of dross;
Within be fed, without be rich no more:
So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And, death once dead, there's no more dying then.

THE CONSTANCY OF LOVE.

JOSHUA
WILVESTER.

563—1618.

WERE I as base as is the lowly plain,
And you my Love as high as heaven above,
Yet should the thoughts of me your humble swain
Ascend to heaven in honour of my Love.
Were I as high as heaven above the plain,
And you my Love as humble and as low
As are the deepest bottoms of the main,
Whereso'er you were, with you my love should go:
Were you the earth, dear Love, and I the skies,
My love should shine on you like to the sun,
And look upon you with ten thousand eyes
Till heaven waxed blind and till the world were done.
Whereso'er I am, below or else above you,
Whereso'er you are, my heart shall truly love you.

TO SLEEP.

SAMUEL
DANIEL.

1562—1619.

CARE-CHARMER Sleep, son of the sable night,
Brother to death in silent darkness born,
Relieve my languish, and restore the light :
With dark forgetting of my care return,
And let the day be time enough to mourn
The shipwreck of my ill-adventured youth :
Let waking eyes suffice to wail their scorn,
Without the torment of the night's untruth.
Cease, dreams, the images of day-desires,
To model forth the passions of the morrow ;
Never let rising sun approve you liars
To add more grief to aggravate my sorrow :
Still let me sleep, embracing clouds in vain,
And never wake to feel the day's disdain.

THE LAST CHANCE.

MICHAEL
DRAYTON.

1563—1631.

SINCE there's no help, come let us kiss and part—
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me ;
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free ;
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And innocence is closing up his eyes,—
Now if thou would'st, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover !

SELF-DEDICATION.

JOHN
DONNE.
1573—1631.

As due by many titles, I resign
Myself to Thee, O God. First I was made
By Thee and for Thee ; and when I was decayed,
Thy blood bought that, the which before was thine :
I am thy son, made with thyself to shine ;
Thy servant, whose pains Thou hast still repaid,
Thy sheep, thine image ; and till I betrayed
Myself, a temple of thy Spirit divine.
Why doth the devil then usurp on me ?
Why doth he steal, nay ravish that's thy right ?
Except Thou rise, and for thine own work fight,
Oh ! I shall soon despair, when I shall see
That Thou lov'st mankind well, yet will not choose me,
And Satan hates me, yet is loth to lose me.

TO DEATH.

JOHN
DONNE.
1573—1631.

DEATH, be not proud, though some have called thee .
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so ;
For those whom thou thinkest thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor Death ; nor yet canst thou kill me.
From rest and sleep, which but thy picture be,
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow :
And soonest our best men with thee do go,
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.
Thou'rt slave to fate, chance, kings, and desperate men,
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell ;
And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,
And better than thy stroke. Why swell'st thou then ?
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more ; Death, thou shalt die.

SIN.

GEORGE
HERBERT.

1593—1633.

LORD, with what care hast Thou begirt us round !
Parents first season us ; then schoolmasters
Deliver us to laws ; they send us bound
To rules of reason, holy messengers ;
Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
The sound of glory ringing in our ears :
Without, our shame ; within, our consciences :
Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears.
Yet all these fences and their whole array
One cunning bosom-sin blows quite away.

THE SON.

GEORGE
HERBERT.

1593—1633.

LET foreign nations of their language boast,
What fine variety each tongue affords ;
I like our language, as our men and coast :
Who cannot dress it well, want wit, not words.
How neatly do we give one only name
To parents' issue and the sun's bright star !
A son is light and fruit, a fruitful flame
Chasing the father's dimness, carried far
From the first man in the east, to fresh and new
Western discoveries of posterity.
So in one word our Lord's humility
We turn upon him in a sense most true ;
For what Christ once in humbleness began,
We him in glory call, "The Son of Man."

ENGLISH SONNETS

THE POWER OF LOVE.

WILLIAM
SHAKESPEARE.

85—1649.

I KNOW that all beneath the moon decays,
And what by mortals in this world is brought
In Time's great periods shall return to nought ;
That fairest states have fatal nights and days ;
I know how all the Muse's heavenly lays,
With toil of spright which are so dearly bought,
As idle sounds of few or none are sought,
And that nought lighter is than airy praise.
I know frail beauty's like the purple flower,
To which one morn oft birth and death affords ;
That love a jarring is of minds' accords,
Where sense and will invassal reason's power :
Know what I list, this all can not me move,
But that, O me ! I both must write and love.

TO SLEEP.

WILLIAM
RUMMOND.
585—1649.

SLEEP, silence' child, sweet father of soft rest,
Prince whose approach peace to all mortals brings,
Indifferent host to shepherds and to kings,
Sole comforter of minds with grief oppressed ;
Lo, by thy charming rod all breathing things
Lie slumb'ring, with forgetfulness possessed,
And yet o'er me to spread thy drowsy wings
Thou spar'st, alas ! who cannot be thy guest.
Since I am thine, O come, but with that face
To inward light which thou art wont to show.
With feigned solace ease a true-felt woe ;
Or if, deaf god, thou do deny that grace,
Come as thou wilt, and what thou wilt bequeath ;
I long to kiss the image of my death.

LIFE IN DEATH.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.

1585—1649.

AH ! burning thoughts, now let me take some rest,
And your tumultuous broils awhile appease ;
Is't not enough, stars, fortune, love molest
Me all at once, but ye must too displease ?
Let hope, though false, yet lodge within my breast ;
My high attempt, though dangerous, yet praise.
What though I trace not right heaven's steepy ways ?
It doth suffice, my fall shall make me blest.
I do not doat on days, nor fear not death,
So that my life be brave, what though not long ?
Let me renowned live from the vulgar throng,
And when ye list, Heavens ! take this borrowed breath :
Men but like visions are, time all doth claim :
He lives who dies to win a lasting name.

DEATH BETTER THAN LIFE.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.
1585—1649.

IF crost with all mishaps be my poor life,
If one short day I never spent in mirth,
If my spright with itself holds lasting strife,
If sorrow's death is but new sorrow's birth ;
If this vain world be but a sable stage
Where slave-born man plays to the scoffing stars ;
If youth be tossed with love, with weakness age,
If knowledge serve to hold our thoughts in wars ;
If time can close the hundred mouths of fame,
And make, what long since past, like that to be ;
If virtue only be an idle name,
If I when I was born was born to die ;
Why seek I to prolong these loathsome days ?
The fairest rose in shortest time decays.

THE LOVER'S TRYST.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.

1585—1649.

ALEXIS, here she stayed ; among these pines,
Sweet hermitress, she did alone repair ;
Here did she spread the treasure of her hair,
More rich than that brought from the Colchian mines ;
She sat her by these muskèd eglantines,
The happy place the print seems yet to bear ;
Her voice did sweeten here thy sugared lines,
To which winds, trees, beasts, birds, did lend their ear ;
Me here she first perceived, and here a morn
Of bright carnations did o'erspread her face ;
Here did she sigh, here first my hopes were born,
Here first I got a pledge of promised grace ;
But ah ! what served it to be happy so
Sith passèd pleasures double but new woe ?

TO HIS LUTE.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.

1585—1649.

My lute, be as thou wert when thou didst grow
With thy green mother in some shady grove,
When immelodious winds but made thee move,
And birds on thee their ramage did bestow.
Sith that dear voice which did thy sounds approve,
Which wont in such harmonious strains to flow,
Is reft from earth to tune those spheres above,
What art thou but a harbinger of woe ?
Thy pleasing notes be pleasing notes no more,
But orphans' wailings to the fainting ear ;
Each stop a sigh, each sound draws forth a tear ;
Be therefore silent as in woods before :
Or if that any hand to touch thee deign,
Like widowed turtle, still her loss complain.

HIS LOST LOVE.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND

1585—1649.

SWEET Spring, thou turn'st with all thy goodly train,
Thy head with flames, thy mantle bright with flowers;
The zephyrs curl the green locks of the plain,
The clouds for joy in pearls weep down their showers,
Thou turn'st, sweet youth; but ah! my pleasant hours
And happy days with thee come not again
The sad memorials only of my pain
Do with thee come, which turn my sweets to sours.
Thou art the same which still thou wast before,
Delicious, lusty, amiable, fair;
But she whose breath embalmed thy wholesome air,
Is gone; nor gold nor gems her can restore.
Neglected Virtue! seasons go and come,
While thine, forgot, lie closèd in a tomb.

THE DECLINE OF LIFE.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.


1585—1649.

LOOK how the flower which lingeringly doth fade,
The morning's darling late, the summer's queen,
Spoiled of that juice which kept it fresh and green,
As high as it did raise, bows low the head :
Right so my life, contentments being dead,
Or in their contraries but only seen,
With swifter speed declines than erst it spread,
And blasted, scarce now shows what it hath been.
As doth the pilgrim therefore, whom the night
Hastes darkly to imprison on his way,
Think on thy home, my soul, and think aright,
Of what yet rests thee of life's wasting day ;
Thy sun posts westward, passèd is thy morn,
And twice it is not given thee to be born.

ON HIS BEING ARRIVED TO THE AGE OF 23.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

How soon hath Time, the subtle thief of youth,
Stolen on his wing my three-and-twentieth year !
My hasting days fly on with full career,
But my late spring no bud or blossom shew'th ;
Perhaps my semblance might deceive the truth,
That I to manhood am arrived so near ;
And inward ripeness doth much less appear,
That some more timely-happy spirits indu'th,
Yet be it less or more, or soon or slow,
It shall be still in strictest measure even
To that same lot, however mean or high,
Towards which Time leads me, and the will of Heaven ;
All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-Master's eye.



TO THE NIGHTINGALE.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

O NIGHTINGALE, that on yon bloomy spray
Warblest at eve, when all the woods are still,
Thou with fresh hope the lover's heart dost fill,
While the jolly hours lead on propitious May ;
Thy liquid notes that close the eye of day,
First heard before the shallow cuckoo's bill,
Portend success in love ; O if Jove's will
Have linked that amorous power to thy soft lay,
Now timely sing, ere the rude bird of hate
Foretell my hopeless doom in some grove nigh ;
As thou from year to year hast sung too late
For my relief, yet hadst no reason why :
Whether the Muse, or Love call thee his mate,
Both them I serve, and of their train am I.

WHEN THE ASSAULT WAS INTENDED TO THE CITY.

(Nov. 1642.)

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

CAPTAIN or Colonel, or knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
If deed of honour did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms ;
He can requite thee ; for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower ;
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground ; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare.

ON THE RELIGIOUS MEMORY OF MRS. CATHARINE
THOMSON, MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

WHEN Faith and Love which parted from thee never;
Had ripened thy just soul to dwell with God,
Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load
Of Death, called Life; which us from Life doth sever.
Thy works and alms and all thy good endeavour
Stayed not behind, nor in the grave were trod ;
But as Faith pointed with her golden rod,
Followed thee up to joy and bliss for ever.
Love led them on, and Faith who knew them best,
Thy handmaids, clad them o'er with purple beams
And azure wings, that up they flew so drest,
And spake the truth of thee on glorious themes
Before the Judge ; who thenceforth bid thee rest,
And drink thy fill of pure immortal streams.

ON THE LATE MASSACRE IN PIEMONTE.

JOHN
MILTON.

1608—1674.

AVENGE, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold ;
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones
Forget not : in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they
To Heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow
O'er all the Italian fields, where still doth sway
The triple tyrant ; that from these may grow
A hundred-fold, who having learnt thy way
Early may fly the Babylonian woe.

ON HIS BLINDNESS.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

WHEN I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide,
Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,—
‘Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?’
I fondly ask : But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, ‘God doth not need
Either man’s work, or his own gifts ; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best : his state
Is kingly ; thousands at his bidding speed,
And post o’er land and ocean without rest :—
They also serve who only stand and wait.’

TO CYRIAC SKINNER.

JOHN
MILTON.

1608—1674.

CYRIAC, whose grandsire on the royal bench
Of British Themis, with no mean applause
Pronounced, and in his volumes taught our laws,
Which others at their bar so often wrench ;
To-day deep thoughts resolve with me to drench
In mirth, that after no repenting draws ;
Let Euclid rest and Archimedes pause,
And what the Swede intends, and what the French:
To measure life learn thou betimes, and know
Toward solid good what leads the nearest way ;
For other things mild Heaven a time ordains,
And disapproves that care, though wise in show,
That with superfluous burden loads the day,
And when God sends a cheerful hour, refrains.

TO CYRIAC SKINNER, UPON HIS BLINDNESS.

JOHN
MILTON.

1608—1674.

CYRIAC, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear
To outward view, of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light their seeing have forgot ;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate one jot
Of heart or hope ; but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask ?
The conscience, Friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side,
This thought might lead me through this world's vain
mask
Content though blind, had I no better guide.

TO MR. LAWRENCE.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

LAWRENCE, of virtuous father virtuous son,
Now that the fields are dank and ways are mire,
Where shall we sometimes meet, and by the fire
Help waste a sullen day, what may be won
From the hard season gaining? Time will run
On smoother, till Favonius re-inspire
The frozen earth, and clothe in fresh attire
The lily and rose, that neither sowed nor spun.
What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste, with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of those delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

ON HIS DECEASED WIFE.

JOHN
MILTON.
1608—1674.

METHOUGHT I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of child-bed taint
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have,
Full sight of her in Heaven without restraint,
Came vested all in white, pure as her mind :
Her face was veiled ; yet to my fancied sight
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But O, as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night.

THE MEANING OF LIFE.

BENJAMIN
STILLING-
FLEET.

1702—1771.

WHEN I behold thee, blameless Williamson,
Wrecked like an infant on a savage shore,
While others round on borrowed pinions soar,
My busy fancy calls thy thread mis-spun ;
Till Faith instructs me the deceit to shun
While thus she speaks,—‘ Those wings that from the
store
Of virtue were not lent, howe’er, they bore
In this gross air, will melt when near the sun.
The truly ambitious wait for Nature’s time :
Content by certain, though by slow degrees
To mount above the reach of vulgar flight ;
Nor is that man confined to this low clime,
Who but the extremest skirts of glory sees
And hears celestial echoes with delight.’

ON THE DEATH OF RICHARD WEST.

THOMAS
GRAY.

1716—1771.

IN vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire,
The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
These ears, alas ! for other notes repine,
A different object do these eyes require ;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine,
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire ;
Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
And new-born pleasure brings to happier men ;
The fields to all their wonted tribute bear,
To warm their little loves the birds complain ;
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more, because I weep in vain.

ANNIVERSARY.

WILLIAM
MASON.

1725-1797.

A PLAINTIVE sonnet flowed from Milton's pen
When Time had stolen his three and twentieth year :
Say shall not I then shed one tuneful tear,
Robbed by the thief of three-score years and ten ?
No ! for the foes of all life-lengthened men,
Trouble and toil, approach not yet too near ;
Reason, meanwhile, and health, and memory dear,
Hold unimpaired their weak, yet wonted reign :
Still round my sheltered lawn I pleased can stray ;
Still trace my sylvan blessings to their spring :
BEING OF BEINGS ! yes, that silent lay,
Which musing Gratitude delights to sing,
Still to thy sapphire throne shall Faith convey,
And Hope, the cherub of unwearied wing.

ON REVISITING THE RIVER LODDON.

THOMAS
WARTON.
1728—1790.

AH ! what a weary race my feet have run,
Since first I trod thy banks with alders crowned,
And thought my way was all through fairy ground,
Beneath thy azure sky, and golden sun,—
Where first my Muse to lisp her notes begun !
While pensive Memory traces back the round,
Which fills the varied interval between,
Much pleasure, more of sorrow, marks the scene.
Sweet native stream ! those skies and suns so pure
No more return to cheer my evening road ;
Yet still one joy remains—that not obscure,
Nor useless, all my vacant days have flowed,
From youth's gay dawn to manhood's prime mature,
Nor with the Muse's laurel unbestowed.

WRITTEN ON A BLANK LEAF OF DUGDALE'S
MONASTICON.

THOMAS
WARTON.
1728—1790.

DEEM not devoid of elegance the sage,
By Fancy's genuine feelings unbeguiled,
Of painful pedantry the poring child,
Who turns of these proud domes the historic page,
Now sunk by Time and Henry's fiercer rage.
Think'st thou the warbling Muses never smiled
On his lone hours? Ingenuous views engage
His thoughts on themes unclassic falsely styled,
Intent. While cloistered Piety displays
Her mouldering roll, the piercing eye explores
New manners, and the pomp of elder days,
Whence culls the pensive bard his pictured stores.
Nor rough, nor barren, are the winding ways
Of hoar antiquity, but strewn with flowers.

TO MARY UNWIN.

WILLIAM
COWPER.

1731—1800.

MARY ! I want a lyre with other strings,
Such aid from heaven as some have feigned they drew,
An eloquence scarce given to mortals, new
And undebased by praise of meaner things,
That ere through age or woe I shed my wings,
I may record thy worth with honour due,
In verse as musical as thou art true,
And that immortalizes whom it sings ;—
But thou hast little need. There is a Book
By seraphs writ with beams of heavenly light,
On which the eyes of God not rarely look,
A chronicle of actions just and bright—
There all thy deeds, my faithful Mary, shine ;
And since thou own'st that praise, I spare thee mine.

TO JOHN JOHNSON,

ON HIS PRESENTING ME WITH AN ANTIQUE BUST OF HOMER.

WILLIAM
COWPER.

1731—1800.

KINSMAN beloved, and as a son, by me !
When I behold this fruit of thy regard,
The sculptured form of my old favourite bard,
I reverence feel for him, and love for thee.
Joy too, and grief. Much joy that there should be
Wise men and learned, who grudge not to reward
With some applause my bold attempt and hard,
Which others scorn ; critics by courtesy.
The grief is this, that sunk in Homer's mine,
I lose my precious years, now soon to fail,
Handling his gold, which howsoe'er it shine,
Proves dross when balanced in the Christian scale.
Be wiser thou !—like our forefather *DONNE*,
Seek heavenly wealth, and work for God alone.

DECEMBER MORNING.

ANNA
SEWARD.
1747—1809.

I LOVE to rise ere gleams the tardy light,
Winter's pale dawn ; and as warm fires illume,
And cheerful tapers shine around the room,
Through misty windows bend my musing sight,
Where, round the dusky lawn, the mansions white,
With shutters closed peer faintly through the gloom,
That slow recedes ; while yon grey spires assume,
Rising from their dark pile, an added height
By indistinctness given.—Then to decree
The grateful thoughts to God, ere they unfold
To friendship or the Muse, or seek with glee
Wisdom's rich page. O hours more worth than gold,
By whose blest use we lengthen life, and free
From drear decays of age, outlive the old !

THE VANITY OF LIFE.

CHARLOTTE
SMITH.

1749—1806.

SHOULD the lone wanderer, fainting on his way,
Rest for a moment of the sultry hours,
And though his path through thorns and roughness lay,
Pluck the wild rose, or woodbine's gadding flowers,
Weaving gay wreaths beneath some sheltering tree,
The sense of sorrow he awhile may lose ;
So have I sought thy flowers, fair Poesy !
So charmed my way with friendship and the muse.
But darker now grows life's unhappy day,
Dark with new clouds of evil yet to come,
Her pencil sickening Fancy throws away,
And weary Hope reclines upon the tomb ;
And points my wishes to that tranquil shore,
Where the pale spectre Care pursues no more.

ON PARTING WITH HIS BOOKS.

WILLIAM
ROSCOE.

1753—1831.

As one who destined from his friends to part,
Regrets his loss, but hopes again erewhile
To share their converse and enjoy their smile,
And tempers, as he may, affliction's dart ;
Thus loved associates ! chiefs of elder Art !
Teachers of wisdom ! who could once beguile
My tedious hours, and lighten every toil,
I now resign you—nor with fainting heart.
For pass a few short years, or days, or hours,
And happier seasons may their dawn unfold,
And all your sacred fellowship restore ;
When, freed from earth, unlimited its powers,
Mind shall with mind direct communion hold,
And kindred spirits meet to part no more.

TO HOPE.

HELEN
MARIA
WILLIAMS.
—
1762—1827.

O EVER skilled to wear the form we love !
To bid the shapes of fear and grief depart ;
Come, gentle Hope ! with one gay smile remove
The lasting sadness of an aching heart.
Thy voice, benign enchantress ! let me hear ;
Say that for me some pleasures yet shall bloom,
That fancy's radiance, friendship's precious tear,
Shall soften, or shall chase, misfortune's gloom.
But come not glowing in the dazzling ray
Which once with dear illusions charmed my eye ;
Oh, strew no more, sweet flatterer ! on my way
The flowers I fondly thought too bright to die :
Visions less fair will soothe my pensive breast
That asks not happiness, but longs for rest.

ECHO AND SILENCE.

SIR SAMUEL
EGERTON
BRYDGES.
—
1762—1837.

In eddying course when leaves began to fly,
And Autumn in her lap the store to strew,
As 'mid wild scenes I chanced the Muse to woo
Through glens untrod, and woods that frowned on high,
Two sleeping Nymphs with wonder mute I spy !
And lo, she's gone ! In robe of dark-green hue,
'Twas Echo from her sister Silence flew ;
For quick the hunter's horn resounded to the sky !
In shade affrighted Silence melts away ;
Not so her sister :—hark ! for onward still
With far-heard step she takes her listening way,
Bounding from rock to rock, and hill to hill !
Ah, mark the merry maid in mockful play
With thousand mimic tones the laughing forest fill.

WRITTEN AT OSTEND.

WILLIAM
LISLE
BOWLES.
—
1762—1850.

How sweet the tuneful bells responsive peal !
As when at opening morn, the fragrant breeze
Breathes on the trembling sense of pale disease,
So piercing to my heart their force I feel !
And hark ! with lessening cadence now they fall !
And now along the white and level tide,
They fling their melancholy music wide ;
Bidding me many a tender thought recall
Of summer-days, and those delightful years
When from an ancient tower in life's fair prime,
The mournful magic of their mingling chime
First waked my wondering childhood into tears !
But seeming now, when all those days are o'er
The sounds of joy once heard and heard no more.

INFLUENCE OF TIME ON GRIEF.

WILLIAM
LISLE
BOWLES.
—
1762—1850.

O TIME! who know'st a lenient hand to lay
Softest on sorrow's wound and slowly thence,
Lulling to sad repose the weary sense,
The faint pang stealest unperceived away ;
On thee I rest my only hope at last,
And think, when thou hast dried the bitter tear
That flows in vain o'er all my soul held dear,
I may look back on every sorrow past,
And meet life's peaceful evening with a smile :—
As some lone bird, at day's departing hour,
Sings in the sunbeam, of the transient shower
Forgetful, though its wings are wet the while ;—
Yet, ah ! how much must that poor heart endure,
Which hopes from thee, and thee alone, a cure.

ABSENCE.

WILLIAM
LISLE
BOWLES.

1762—1850.

THERE is strange music in the stirring wind,
When lowers the autumnal eve, and all alone
To the dark wood's cold covert thou art gone,
Whose ancient trees on the rough slope reclined
Rock, and at times scatter their tresses sere.
If in such shades beneath their murmuring,
Thou late hast passed the happier hours of spring,
With sadness thou wilt mark the fading year ;
Chiefly if one, with whom such sweets at morn
Or evening thou hast shared, afar shall stray.
O Spring, return ! return, auspicious May !
But sad will be thy coming, and forlorn,
If She return not with thy cheering ray,
Who from these shades is gone far, far away.

SUPPOSED TO BE WRITTEN AT LEMNOS.

THOMAS
RUSSELL.
1763—1788.

ON this lone isle, whose rugged rocks affright
The cautious pilot, ten revolving years
Great Pæan's son, unwonted erst to tears,
Wept o'er his wound : alike each rolling light
Of heaven he watched, and blamed its lingering flight,
By day the sea-mew screaming round his cave
Drove slumber from his eyes, the chiding wave
And savage howlings chased his dreams by night.
Hope still was his ; in each low breeze that sighed
Through his rude grot he heard a coming oar,
In each white cloud a coming sail he spied ;
Nor seldom listened to the fancied roar
Of Oeta's torrents, or the hoarser tide
That parts famed Trachis from the Euboic shore.

THE SONNET.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

SCORN not the Sonnet ; Critic you have frowned
Mindless of its just honours ; with this key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart ; the melody
Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound ;
A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound ;
With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief ;
The Sonnet glittered like a gay myrtle leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow ; a glowworm lamp
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land
To struggle through dark ways ; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The Thing became a trumpet ; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few !

THE SONNET.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room ;
And hermits are contented with their cells ;
And students with their pensive citadels :
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells :
In truth, the prison unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is : and hence for me,
In sundry moods 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground ;
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

TO SLEEP.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

FOND words have oft been spoken to thee, Sleep !
And thou hast had thy store of tenderest names ;
The very sweetest Fancy culls or frames,
When thankfulness of heart is strong and deep !
Dear Bosom-child we call thee, that dost steep
In rich reward all suffering ; Balm that tames
All anguish ; Saint that evil thoughts and aims
Takest away, and into souls dost creep,
Like to a breeze from heaven. Shall I alone,
I surely not a man ungently made,
Call thee worst Tyrant by which flesh is crost ?
Perverse, self-willed to own and to disown,
Mere slave of them who never for thee prayed,
Still last to come where thou art wanted most !

TO SLEEP.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one ; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring ; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water and pure sky ;
By turns have all been thought of ; yet I lie
Sleepless ; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees ;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth :
So do not let me wear to-night away :
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth ?
Come, blessed barrier betwixt day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

EARTH has not anything to show more fair ;
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky ;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

THE SPINNING-WHEEL.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

GRIEF, thou hast lost an ever-ready friend
Now that the cottage Spinning-wheel is mute ;
And Care—a comforter that best could suit
Her froward mood, and softliest reprehend ;
And Love—a charmer's voice, that used to lend,
More efficaciously than aught that flows
From harp or lute, kind influence to compose
The throbbing pulse,—else troubled without end :
Even Joy could tell, Joy craving truce and rest
From her own overflow, what power sedate
On those revolving motions did await
Assiduously, to soothe her aching breast—
And, to a point of just relief, abate
The mantling triumphs of a day too blest.

POETIC PAINS.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

'THERE is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only poets know :—'twas rightly said ;
Whom could the Muses else allure to tread
Their smoothest paths, to wear their lightest chains
When happiest Fancy has inspired the strains,
How oft the malice of one luckless word
Pursues the Enthusiast to the social board,
Haunts him belated on the silent plains !
Yet he repines not, if his thought stand clear
At last, of hindrance and obscurity,
Fresh as the star that crowns the brow of morn ;
Bright, speckless, as a softly-moulded tear
The moment it has left the virgin's eye,
Or rain-drop lingering on the pointed thorn.

DESIDERIA.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

SURPRISED by joy—impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh ! with whom
But Thee, deep-buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find ?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee ? through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss ?—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more ;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

THE HOLINESS OF CHILDHOOD.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free ;
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
The gentleness of heaven is on the sea.
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child ! dear Girl ! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

LOSS OF SPIRITUAL LIFE.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

THE world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon,
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;
It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

PERSONAL TALK.

I.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

I AM not one who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk,—
Of friends who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight ;
And for my chance-acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors for one feast-night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire ;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.

PERSONAL TALK.

II.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

‘YET life,’ you say, ‘is life ; we have seen and see
And with a living pleasure we describe ;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity.
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe.’
Even be it so : yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world’s true worldlings, rank not me !
Children are blest and powerful ; their world lies
More justly balanced ; partly at their feet,
And part far from them :—sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet ;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave ; the meanest we can meet !

PERSONAL TALK.

III.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

WINGS have we,—and as far as we can go
We may find pleasure : wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
Dreams, books, are each a world ; and books, we know
Are a substantial world both pure and good :
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow.
There find-I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear ;
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor ;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

PERSONAL TALK.

IV.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

NOR can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine ; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking ; rancour, never sought,
Comes to me not ; malignant truth or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought ;
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbour, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares—
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays !
Oh ! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

A WOODLAND DREAM.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

How sweet it is, when mother Fancy rocks
The wayward brain, to saunter through a wood !
An old place, full of many a lovely brood,
Tall trees, green arbours, and ground-flowers in flocks ;
And wild rose tip-toe upon hawthorn stocks,
Like a bold girl who plays her agile pranks
At wakes and fairs with wandering mountebanks,—
When she stands cresting the clown's head, and mocks
The crowd beneath her. Verily I think,
Such place to me is sometimes like a dream
Or map of the whole world : thoughts, link by link
Enter through ears and eyesight, with such gleam
Of all things, that at last in fear I shrink,
And leap at once from the delicious stream.

INSIDE OF KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

TAX not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned,
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white-robed scholars only, this immense
And glorious work of fine intelligence !
Give all thou canst ; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more ;—
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die ;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.

WRITTEN UPON A BLANK LEAF IN "THE COMPLETE
ANGLER."

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

WHILE flowing rivers yield a blameless sport,
Shall live the name of Walton : sage benign !
Whose pen, the mysteries of the rod and line
Unfolding, did not fruitlessly exhort
To reverend watching of each still report
That Nature utters from her rural shrine.
Meek, nobly versed in simple discipline—
He found the longest summer day too short,
To his loved pastime given by sedgy Lee,
Or down the tempting maze of Shawford brook—
Fairer than life itself, in this sweet Book,
The cowslip-bank and shady willow-tree ;
And the fresh meads—where flowed, from every nook
Of his full bosom, gladsome Piety !

WALTON'S BOOK OF LIVES.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.


THERE are no colours in the fairest sky
So fair as these. The feather whence the pen
Was shaped, that traced the lives of these good men,
Dropped from an angel's wing. With moistened eye
We read of Faith and purest Charity
In statesman, priest, and humble citizen.
O could we copy their mild virtues, then
What joy to live, what blessedness to die!
Methinks their very names shine still and bright ;
Apart, like glow-worms on a summer night ;
Or lonely tapers when from far they fling
A guiding ray ; or seen—like stars on high,
Satellites burning in a lucid ring
Around meek Walton's heavenly memory.

ENGLAND AND SWITZERLAND, 1802.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

Two Voices are there ; one is of the Sea,
One of the Mountains ; each a mighty voice :
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty !
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him ; but hast vainly striven :
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ;
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee !



SEPTEMBER, 1802.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

INLAND, within a hollow vale, I stood ;
And saw while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near !
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.
I shrunk ; for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake or river bright and fair,
A span of waters ; yet what power is there !
What mightiness for evil and for good !
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity ;
Yet in themselves are nothing ! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only, the nations shall be great and free.

LONDON, 1802.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

O FRIEND ! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being as I am oppress,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show ; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom !—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest :
The wealthiest man among us is the best :
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry ; and these we adore :
Plain living and high thinking are no more.
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

LONDON, 1802.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

MILTON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men ;
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart ;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free ;
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

BRITISH FREEDOM.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.
—
1770—1850.

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom which to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, 'with pomp of waters unwithstood.'
Roused though it be full often to a mood
Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
Should perish ; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old ;
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake ; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

UNFILIAL FEARS.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

WHEN I have borne in memory what has tamed
Great nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers and desert
The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
I had, my country!—am I to be blamed?
But when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
But dearly must we prize thee; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men;
And I by my affection was beguiled.
What wonder if a poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child?

NOVEMBER, 1806.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

ANOTHER year !—another deadly blow !
Another mighty Empire overthrown !
And we are left, or shall be left, alone ;
The last that dare to struggle with the foe.
'Tis well ! from this day forward we shall know
That in ourselves our safety must be sought ;
That by our own right hands it must be wrought ;
That we must stand unpropped, or be laid low.
O dastard whom such foretaste doth not cheer !
We shall exult if they who rule the land
Be men who hold its many blessings dear,
Wise, upright, valiant ; not a servile band,
Who are to judge of danger which they fear,
And honour which they do not understand.

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC.

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

1770—1850.

ONCE did She hold the gorgeous East in fee ;
And was the safeguard of the West : the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest child of liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free ;
No guile seduced, no force could violate ;
And when she took unto herself a mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay,—
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day :
Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.

TO THE AUTHOR OF "THE ROBBERS."

SAMUEL
TAYLOR
COLERIDGE.
—
1772—1834.

SCHILLER ! that hour I would have wished to die,
If through the shuddering midnight I had sent
From the dark dungeon of the tower time-rent,
That fearful voice, a famished Father's cry—
Lest in some after moment aught more mean
Might stamp me mortal ! A triumphant shout
Black Horror screamed, and all her goblin rout
Diminished shrunk from the more withering scene !
Ah ! Bard, tremendous in sublimity !
Could I behold thee in thy loftier mood,
Wandering at eve with finely frenzied eye
Beneath some vast old tempest-swinging wood !
Awhile with mute awe gazing I would brood :
Then weep aloud in a wild ecstasy !

TO THE RIVER OTTER.

SAMUEL
TAYLOR
COLERIDGE.
—
1772—1834.

DEAR native brook ! wild streamlet of the west !
How many various-fated years have past,
What happy, and what mournful hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth, thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps ! yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny ray,
But straight with all their tints thy waters rise,
Thy crossing-plank, thy marge with willows grey,
And bedded sand, that veined with various dyes,
Gleamed through thy bright transparence ! On my
way,
Visions of childhood ! oft have ye beguiled
Lone manhood's cares, yet waking fondest sighs :
Ah ! that once more I were a careless child !

FANCY IN NUBIBUS.

SAMUEL
TAYLOR
COLERIDGE.
—
1772—1834.

OH, it is pleasant with a heart at ease,
Just after sunset or by moonlight skies,
To make the shifting clouds be what you please,
Or let the easily-persuaded eyes
Own each quaint likeness issuing from the mould
Of a friend's fancy ; or with head bent low,
And cheek aslant, see rivers flow of gold,
'Twixt crimson banks ; and then, a traveller, go
From mount to mount, through Cloud-land—gorgeous
land !
Or listening to the tide with closèd sight,
Be that blind Bard, who on the Chian strand,
By those deep sounds possessed with inward light
Beheld the Iliad and the Odyssee
Rise to the swelling of the voiceful sea.

NIGHT AND DEATH.

JOSEPH
BLANCO
WHITE.

1773—1840.

MYSTERIOUS Night ! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue ?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus with the host of heaven came,
And lo ! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O Sun ! or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind !
Why do we then shun death with anxious strife ?
If Light can thus deceive, wherefore not Life ?

WINTER.

ROBERT
SOUTHEY.

1774—1843.

A WRINKLED, crabbèd man they picture thee,
Old Winter, with a rugged beard as grey
As the long moss upon the apple-tree ;
Blue-lipt, an ice-drop at thy sharp blue nose,
Close muffled up, and on thy dreary way
Plodding alone through sleet and drifting snows.
They should have drawn thee by the high-heapt hearth,
Old Winter ! seated in thy great armed chair,
Watching the children at their Christmas mirth ;
Or circled by them as thy lips declare
Some merry jest, or tale of murder dire,
Or troubled spirit that disturbs the night,
Pausing at times to rouse the mouldering fire,
Or taste the old October brown and bright.

LEISURE.

CHARLES
LAMB.
1775—1835.

THEY talk of Time and of Time's galling yoke,
That like a millstone on man's mind doth press,
Which only works and business can redress ;
Of divine Leisure such foul lies are spoke,
Wounding her fair gifts with calumnious stroke.
But might I, fed with silent meditation,
Assoilèd live from that fiend, Occupation—
Improbis Labor, which my spirits hath broke—
I'd drink of Time's rich cup, and never surfeit,
Fling in more days than went to make the gem
That crowned the white top of Methusalem ;
Yea, on my weak neck take and never forfeit,
Like Atlas bearing up the dainty sky,
The heaven-sweet burden of eternity.

TO THE HARVEST MOON.

WILLIAM
STANLEY
ROSCOE.

1780—1843.

AGAIN thou reignest in thy golden hall,
Rejoicing in thy sway, fair queen of night !
The ruddy reapers hail thee with delight,
Theirs is the harvest, theirs the joyous call
For tasks well ended ere the season's fall.
Sweet Orb, thou smilest from thy starry height,
But whilst on them thy beams are shedding bright,
To me thou com'st o'ershadowed with a pall :
To me alone the year hath fruitless flown ;
Earth hath fulfilled her trust through all her lands,
The good man gathereth now where he had sown,
And the Great Master in His vineyard stands ;
But I, as if my task were all unknown,
Come to His gates, alas ! with empty hands.

TO A WATER BIRD.

LORD
THURLOW.
1781—1829.

O MELANCHOLY bird !—a winter's day
Thou standest by the margin of the pool,
And taught by God dost thy whole being school
To patience, which all evil can allay ;
God has appointed thee the fish thy prey ;
And given thyself a lesson to the fool
Unthrifty, to submit to moral rule,
And his unthinking course by thee to weigh.
There need not schools, nor the professor's chair,
Though these be good, true wisdom to impart ;
He who has not enough for these to spare
Of time or gold, may yet amend his heart,
And teach his soul by brooks and rivers fair ;
Nature is always wise in every part.

SPRING.

EBENEZER
ELLIOTT.

1781—1849.

AGAIN the violet of our early days
Drinks beauteous azure from the golden sun,
And kindles into fragrance at his blaze;
The streams, rejoiced that winter's work is done,
Talk of to-morrow's cowslips as they run.
Wild apple! thou art bursting into bloom;
Thy leaves are coming, snowy-blossomed thorn!
Wake, buried lily! spirit, quit thy tomb;
And thou, shade-loving hyacinth be born!
Then haste, sweet rose! sweet woodbine, hymn the morn,
Whose dew-drops shall illumine with pearly light
Each grassy blade that thick embattled stands
From sea to sea, while daisies infinite
Uplift in praise their little glowing hands,
O'er every hill that under heaven expands.

THOUGHTS OF DEATH.

HENRY
KIRKE
WHITE.
—
1785—1806.

As thus oppressed with many a heavy care,
(Though young yet sorrowful,) I turn my feet
To the dark woodland, longing much to greet
The form of Peace, if chance she sojourn there ;
Deep thought and dismal, verging to despair,
Fills my sad breast, and tired with this vain coil,
I shrink dismayed before life's upland toil.
And as amid the leaves the evening air
Whispers still melody,—I think ere long,
When I no more can hear, these woods will speak ;
And then a sad smile plays upon my cheek,
And mournful phantasies upon me throng,
And I do ponder with most strange delight
On the calm slumbers of the dead man's night.

THE EVENING CLOUD.

JOHN
WILSON.

1785—1854.

A CLOUD lay cradled near the setting sun,
A gleam of crimson tinged its braided snow ;
Long had I watched the glory moving on,
(O'er the still radiance of the Lake below ;
Tranquil its spirit seemed and floated slow ;
Even in its very motion there was rest ;
While every breath of eve that chanced to blow,
Wafted the traveller to the beauteous West.
Emblem, methought, of the departed soul,
To whose white robe the gleam of bliss is given ;
And by the breath of mercy made to roll
Right onwards to the golden gates of Heaven ;
Where to the eye of Faith it peaceful lies,
And tells to man his glorious destinies.

ON THE CASTLE OF CHILLON.

LORD
BYRON.
1788—1824.

ETERNAL Spirit of the chainless Mind !
 Brightest in dungeons, Liberty, thou art—
 For there thy habitation is the heart—
 The heart which love of Thee alone can bind ;
 And when thy sons to fetters are consigned,
 To fetters, and the damp vault's dayless gloom,
 Their country conquers with their martyrdom
 And Freedom's fame finds wings on every wind.
 Chillon ! thy prison is a holy place,
 And thy sad floor an altar, for 'twas trod,
 Until his very steps have left a trace
 Worn as if thy cold pavement were a sod,
 By Bonnivard ! May none those marks efface !
 For they appeal from tyranny to God.

POLITICAL GREATNESS.

PERCY
BYSSHE
SHELLEY.
—
1792—1822.

NOR happiness, nor majesty, nor fame,
Nor peace, nor strength, nor skill in arms or arts,
Shepherd those herds whom tyranny makes tame :—
Verse echoes not one beating of their hearts ;
History is but the shadow of their shame ;
Art veils her glass, or from the pageant starts,
As to oblivion their blind millions fleet
Staining that heaven with obscene imagery
Of their own likeness. What are numbers knit
By force or custom ? Man who man would be
Must rule the empire of himself ; in it
Must be supreme, establishing his throne
On vanquished will, quelling the anarchy
Of hopes and fears, being himself alone.

OZYMANDIAS.

PERCY
BYSSHE
SHELLEY.

1792—1822.

I MET a traveller from an antique land
Who said : Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half-sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed ;
And on the pedestal these words appear :
' My name is Ozymandias, king of kings :
Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair !'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

SPRING FLOWERS.

JOHN
KEBLE.
1792—1866.

THE loveliest flowers the closest cling to earth,
And they first feel the sun ; so violets blue,
So the soft star-like primrose drenched in dew,
The happiest of Spring's happy, fragrant birth.
To gentlest touches sweetest tones reply ;—
Still humbleness with her low-breathèd voice
Can steal o'er man's proud heart, and win his choice
From earth to heaven, with mightier witchery
Than eloquence or wisdom e'er could own.
Bloom on then in your shade, contented bloom,
Sweet flowers, nor deem yourselves to all unknown,—
Heaven knows you, by whose gales and dews ye thrive,
They know, who one day for their altered doom
Shall thank you, taught by you to abase themselves and
live.

EARTH AND HEAVEN.

JOHN
KEBLE.
1792—1866.

WHEN I behold yon arch magnificent
Spanning the gorgeous West, the autumnal bed
Where the great Sun now hides his weary head,
With here and there a purple isle, that rent
From that huge cloud their solid continent,
Seem floating in a sea of golden light,
A fire is kindled in my musing sprite,
And Fancy whispers :—Such the glories lent
To this our mortal life ; most glowing fair,
But built on clouds, and melting while we gaze.
Yet since those shadowy lights sure witness bear
Of One not seen, the undying Sun and Source
Of good and fair, who wisely them surveys
Will use them well to cheer his heavenward course.

AT HOOKER'S TOMB.

JOHN
KEBLE.

1792—1866.

THE grey-eyed Morn was saddened with a shower,
A silent shower, that trickled down so still,
Scarce drooped beneath its weight the tenderest flower,
Scarce could you trace it on the twinkling rill,
Or moss-stone bathed in dew. It was an hour
Most meet for prayer beside thy lowly grave,
Most for thanksgiving meet, that Heaven such power
To thy serene and humble spirit gave.
' Who sow good seed with tears, shall reap in joy.'
So thought I as I watched the gracious rain,
And deemed it like that silent sad employ
Whence sprung thy glory's harvest, to remain
For ever. God hath sworn to lift on high
Who sinks himself by true humility.

CARELESS RAMBLES.

JOHN
CLARE.

1793—1864.

I LOVE to wander at my idle will
In summer's luscious prime about the fields,
To kneel when thirsty at the little rill,
And sip the draught its pebbly bottom yields;
And where the maple bush its fountain shields,
To lie, and rest a sultry hour away,
Cropping the swelling peascod from the land;
Or 'mid the sheltering woodland-walks to stray
Where oaks for aye o'er their old shadows stand,
'Neath whose dark foliage with a welcome hand,
I pluck the luscious strawberry ripe and red
As Beauty's lips ;—and in my fancy's dreams,
As 'mid the velvet moss I musing tread,
Feel Life as lovely as her picture seems.

THE THRUSH'S NEST.

JOHN
CLARE.

1793—1864.

WITHIN a thick and spreading hawthorn bush,
That overhung a molehill large and round,
I heard from morn to morn a merry thrush
Sing hymns of rapture, while I drank the sound
With joy—and oft, an unintruding guest,
I watched her secret toils from day to day ;
How true she warped the moss to form her nest,
And modelled it within with wood and clay.
And by and by, like heath-bells gilt with dew,
There lay her shining eggs as bright as flowers,
Ink-spotted over, shells of green and blue :
And there I witnessed in the summer hours
A brood of nature's minstrels chirp and fly,
Glad as the sunshine and the laughing sky.

THE LAST OF APRIL.

JOHN
CLARE.
1793—1864.

OLD April wanes, and her last dewy morn
Her death-bed steeps in tears ;—to hail the May
New blooming blossoms 'neath the sun are born,
And all poor April's charms are swept away.
The early primrose, peeping once so gay,
Is now choked up with many a mounting weed,
And the poor violet we once admired
Creeps in the grass unsought for ; flowers succeed,
Gaudy and new, and more to be desired,
And of the old the schoolboy seemeth tired.
So with us all, poor April, as with thee !
Each hath his day ;—the future brings my fears :
Friends may grow weary, new flowers rising be,
And my last end, like thine, be steeped in tears.

THE LILIES OF THE FIELD.

FELICIA D.
HEMANS.

1794—1835.

FLOWERS ! when the Saviour's calm, benignant eye
Fell on your gentle beauty ; when from you
That heavenly lesson for all hearts He drew,
Eternal, universal, as the sky ;
Then in the bosom of your purity
A voice He set as in a temple-shrine,
That life's quick travellers ne'er might pass you by.
Unwarned of that sweet oracle divine.
And though too oft its low, celestial sound
By the harsh notes of work-day Care is drowned,
And the loud steps of vain, unlistening Haste ;
Yet the great ocean hath no tone of power
Mightier to reach the soul in thought's hushed hour,
Than yours, ye Lilies ! chosen thus and graced !

FLIGHT OF THE SPIRIT.

FELICIA D.
HEMANS.

1794—1835.

WHITHER, oh ! whither wilt thou wing thy way ?
What solemn region first upon thy sight
Shall break, unveiled for terror or delight ?
What hosts, magnificent in dread array,
My spirit ! when thy prison-house of clay,
After long strife is rent ? Fond, fruitless quest !
The unfledged bird, within his narrow nest,
Sees but a few green branches o'er him play,
And through their parting leaves, by fits revealed,
A glimpse of summer sky ; nor knows the field
Wherein his dormant powers must yet be tried.
Thou art that bird !—of what beyond thee lies
Far in the untracked, immeasurable skies
Knowing but this—that thou shalt find thy Guide !

SABBATH SONNET.

FELICIA D.
HEMANS.

1794—1835

How many blessed groups this hour are bending
Through England's primrose meadow-paths their way
Towards spire and tower, 'midst shadowy elms ascend-
ing,
Whence the sweet chimes proclaim the hallowed day !
The halls from old heroic ages gray
Pour their fair children forth ; and hamlets low,
With whose thick orchard-blooms the soft winds play,
Send out their inmates in a happy flow,
Like a freed vernal stream. I may not tread
With them those pathways,—to the feverish bed
Of sickness bound ; yet, O my God ! I bless
Thy mercy, that with Sabbath peace hath filled
My chastened heart, and all its throbbings stilled
To one deep calm of lowliest thankfulness !

BEAUTIFUL IN DEATH.

WILLIAM
SIDNEY
WALKER.
—
1795—1846.

THEY say that thou wert lovely on thy bier,
More lovely than in life ; that when the thrall
Of earth was loosed, it seemed as though a pall
Of years were lifted, and thou didst appear
Such, as of old amidst thy home's calm sphere
Thou sat'st, a kindly Presence felt by all
In joy or grief, from morn to evening-fall,
The peaceful Genius of that mansion dear.
Was it the craft of all persuading Love
That wrought this marvel ? or is Death indeed
A mighty master, gifted from above
With alchemy benign, to wounded hearts
Minist'ring thus, by quaint and subtle arts,
Strange comfort, whereon after-thought may feed ?

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

JOHN
KEATS.

1795—1821.

MUCH have I travelled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen ;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne :
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold :
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken ;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

THE HUMAN SEASONS.

JOHN
KEATS.

795—1821.

FOUR seasons fill the measure of the year ;

There are four seasons in the mind of man ;

He has his lusty Spring, when fancy clear

Takes in all beauty with an easy span :

He has his Summer, when luxuriously

Spring's honeyed cud of youthful thought he loves

To ruminate, and by such dreaming high

Is nearest unto heaven ; quiet coves

His soul has in its Autumn, when his wings

He furleth close ; contented so to look

On mists in idleness—to let fair things

Pass by unheeded as a threshold brook.

He has his Winter, too, of pale misfeature,

Or else he would forego his mortal nature.

A SIGH FOR THE SOUTH.

JOHN
KEATS.

1795--1821.

HAPPY is England ! I could be content
To see no other verdure than its own ;
To feel no other breezes than are blown
Through its tall woods with high romances blent ;
Yet do I sometimes feel a languishment
For skies Italian, and an inward groan
To sit upon an Alp as on a throne,
And half forget what world or worldling meant.
Happy is England, sweet her artless daughters ;
Enough their simple loveliness for me,
Enough their whitest arms in silence clinging :
Yet do I often warmly burn to see
Beauties of deeper glance, and hear their singing,
And float with them about the summer waters.

LOVE'S MISSAL.

JOHN
KEATS.

795—1821.

THE day is gone, and all its sweets are gone !
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist !
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—
Vanished unseasonably at shut of eve,
When the dusk holiday—or holinight
Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave
The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight ;
But, as I've read Love's missal through to-day,
He'll let me sleep, seeing I fast and pray.

A POET'S FEARS.

JOHN
KEATS.

1795—1821.

WHEN I have fears that I may cease to be,
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain,
Before high piled books in charact'ry
Hold like full garners the full-ripened grain ;
When I behold upon the night's starred face,
Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance,
And feel that I may never live to trace
Their shadows, with the magic hand of chance ;
And when I feel, fair creature of an hour !
That I shall never look upon thee more,
Never have relish in the faery power
Of unreflecting love !—then on the shore
Of the wide world I stand alone, and think
Till Love and Fame to nothingness do sink.

TO SLEEP.

JOHN
KEATS.

-1795—1821.

O SOFT embalmer of the still midnight !
Shutting with careful fingers and benign,
Our gloom-pleased eyes, embowered from the light,
Enshaded in forgetfulness divine :
O soothest Sleep ! if so it please thee, close,
In midst of this thine hymn, my willing eyes,
Or wait the amen, ere thy poppy throws
Around my bed its lulling charities ;
Then save me, or the passèd day will shine
Upon my pillow, breeding many woes ;
Save me from curious conscience, that still lords
Its strength, for darkness burrowing like a mole ;
Turn the key deftly in the oilèd wards,
And seal the hushèd casket of my soul.

KEATS'S LAST SONNET.

JOHN
KEATS.

1795—1821.

BRIGHT star ! would I were steadfast as thou art,—
Not in lone splendour hung aloft the night,
And watching, with eternal lids apart,
Like Nature's patient sleepless Eremite,
The moving waters at their priestly task
Of pure ablution round earth's human shores,
Or gazing on the new soft fallen mask
Of snow upon the mountains and the moors :—
No—yet still steadfast, still unchangeable,
Pillowed upon my fair Love's ripening breast
To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,
Awake for ever in a sweet unrest ;
Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever—or else swoon to death.

TO A FRIEND.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

WHEN we were idlers with the loitering rills,
The need of human love we little noted :
Our love was nature ; and the peace that floated
On the white mist, and dwelt upon the hills,
To sweet accord subdued our wayward wills :
One soul was ours, one mind, one heart devoted
That wisely doating asked not why it doated,
And ours the unknown joy, which knowing kills.
But now I find how dear thou wert to me ;
That man is more than half of nature's treasure,
Of that fair Beauty which no eye can see,
Of that sweet music which no ear can measure ;
And now the streams may sing for others' pleasure,
The hills sleep on in their eternity.

THE FIRST MAN.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

WHAT was't awakened first the untried ear
Of that sole man who was all human kind?
Was it the gladsome welcome of the wind,
Stirring the leaves that never yet were sere?
The four mellifluous streams which flowed so near,
Their lulling murmurs all in one combined?
The note of bird unnamed? The startled hind
Bursting the brake—in wonder, not in fear,
Of her new lord? Or did the holy ground
Send forth mysterious melody to greet
The gracious pressure of immaculate feet?
Did viewless seraphs rustle all around,
Making sweet music out of air as sweet?
Or his own voice awake him with its sound?

A CONFESSION.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

LONG time a child, and still a child, when years
Had painted manhood on my cheek, was I ;
For yet I lived like one not born to die :
A thriftless prodigal of smiles and tears,
No hope I needed, and I knew no fears,
But sleep, though sweet, is only sleep ; and waking,
I waked to sleep no more ; at once o'ertaking
The vanguard of my age, with all arrears
Of duty on my back. Nor child, nor man,
Nor youth, nor sage, I find my head is grey,
For I have lost the race I never ran—
A rathe December blights my lagging May ;
And still I am a child, though I be old :
Time is my debtor for my years untold.

FAITH.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.
1796—1849.

Too true it is, my time of power was spent
In idly watering weeds of casual growth,—
That wasted energy to desperate sloth
Declined, and fond self-seeking discontent,—
That the huge debt for all that Nature lent
I sought to cancel,—and was nothing loth
To deem myself an outlaw, severed both
From duty and from hope,—yea, blindly sent
Without an errand, where I would to stray :—
Too true it is that knowing now my state,
I weakly mourn the sin I ought to hate,
Nor love the law I yet would fain obey:
But true it is, above all law and fate
Is Faith, abiding the appointed day.

THE UNPARDONABLE SIN.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.
1796—1849.

If I have sinned in act, I may repent ;
If I have erred in thought, I may disclaim
My silent error, and yet feel no shame ;
But if my soul, big with an ill intent,
Guilty in will, by fate be innocent,
Or being bad yet murmurs at the curse
And incapacity of being worse,
That makes my hungry passion still keep Lent
In keen expectance of a Carnival ;
Where in all worlds that round the sun revolve
And shed their influence on this passive ball,
Abides a power that can my soul absolve ?
Could any sin survive and be forgiven—
One sinful wish would make a hell of heaven.

NIGHT.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

THE crackling embers on the hearth are dead ;
The indoor note of industry is still ;
The latch is fast ; upon the window sill
The small birds wait not for their daily bread ;
The voiceless flowers—how quietly they shed
Their nightly odours ;—and the household rill
Murmurs continuous dulcet sounds that fill
The vacant expectation, and the dread
Of listening night. And haply now She sleeps ;
For all the garrulous noises of the air
Are hushed in peace ; the soft dew silent weeps,
Like hopeless lovers for a maid so fair—
Oh ! that I were the happy dream that creeps
To her soft heart, to find my image there.

TO A LOFTY BEAUTY FROM HER POOR KINSMAN.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

FAIR maid, had I not heard thy baby cries,
Nor seen thy girlish, sweet vicissitude,
Thy mazy motions, striving to elude,
Yet wooing still a parent's watchful eyes,
Thy humours, many as the opal's dyes,
And lovely all ;—methinks thy scornful mood,
And bearing high of stately womanhood,—
Thy brow, where Beauty sits to tyrannize
O'er humble love, had made me sadly fear thee ;
For never sure was seen a royal bride
Whose gentleness gave grace to so much pride,—
My very thoughts would tremble to be near thee ;
But when I see thee at thy father's side,
Old times unqueen thee, and old loves endear thee.

HOMER.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE

1796—1849

FAR from the sight of earth, yet bright and plain
As the clear noon-day sun, an 'orb of song'
Lovely and bright is seen, amid the throng
Of lesser stars, that rise, and wax, and wane,
The transient rulers of the fickle main,
One constant light gleams through the dark and long
And narrow aisle of memory. How strong,
How fortified with all the numerous train
Of truths wert thou, Great Poet of mankind,
Who told'st in verse as mighty as the sea,
And various as the voices of the wind,
The strength of passion rising in the glee
Of battle. Fear was glorified by thee,
And Death is lovely in thy tale enshrined.

PRAYER.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849.

THERE is an awful quiet in the air,
And the sad earth, with moist imploring eye,
Looks wide and wakeful at the pondering sky,
Like Patience slow subsiding to Despair.
But see, the blue smoke as a voiceless prayer,
Sole witness of a secret sacrifice,
Upholds its tardy wreaths, and multiplies
Its soft chameleon breathings in the rare
Capacious ether,—so it fades away,
And nought is seen beneath the pendent blue,
The undistinguishable waste of day ;
So have I dreamed !—Oh ! may the dream be true !—
That praying souls are purged from mortal hue,
And grow as pure as He to whom they pray.

PRAYER.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.

1796—1849

BE not afraid to pray—to pray is right.
Pray, if thou canst, with hope ; but ever pray,
Though hope be weak, or sick with long delay ;
Pray in the darkness, if there be no light.
Far is the time remote from human sight
When war and discord on the earth shall cease ;
Yet every prayer for universal peace
Avails the blessèd time to expedite.
Whate'er is good to wish, ask that of Heaven,
Though it be what thou canst not hope to see :
Pray to be perfect, though material leaven
Forbid the spirit so on earth to be ;
But if for any wish thou darest not pray,
Then pray to God to cast that wish away.

JOY IN SORROW.

CHAUNCEY
HARE
TOWNSHEND
—
1800—1868.

GIVE me thy joy in sorrow, gracious Lord,
And sorrow's self shall like to joy appear !
Although the world should waver in its sphere,
I tremble not, if Thou thy peace afford.
But, Thou withdrawn, I am but as a chord
That vibrates to the pulse of hope and fear ;
Nor rest I more than harps which to the air
Must answer when we place their tuneful board
Against the blast, which thrill unmeaning woe
Even in their sweetness. So no earthly wing
E'er sweeps me but to sadden. Oh, place Thou
My heart beyond the world's sad vibrating :
And where but in Thyself? Oh, circle me
That I may feel no touches save of Thee.

HIDDEN JOYS.

LAMAN
BLANCHARD.
1803—1845.

PLEASURES lie thickest where no pleasures seem :

There's not a leaf that falls upon the ground

But holds some joy, of silence or of sound,

Some sprite begotten of a summer dream ;

The very meanest things are made supreme

With innate ecstasy. No grain of sand

But moves a bright and million-peopled land,

And hath its Eden and its Eves, I deem.

For Love, though blind himself, a curious eye

Hath lent me, to behold the hearts of things,

And touched mine ear with power. Thus far or nigh,

Minute or mighty, fixed or free with wings,

Delight from many a nameless covert sly

Peeps sparkling, and in tones familiar sings.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

WITH stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night,
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground.
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air :
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

BEREAVEMENT.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

WHEN some Beloveds, 'neath whose eye-lids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
'Is God less God that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him ! in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple !'—But I answered, Nay !
What child his filial heart in words can loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely ? can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze ?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears both prayer and praise.

IRREPARABLENESS.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day,
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809-1861.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving ! lighter, none befell,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears ! what are tears ? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing ; at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps, and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only ! If as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded, in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up ! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

COMFORT.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

SPEAK low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss Thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at Thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber while I go
In reach of Thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth,
Till sinking on her breast, love-reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

You see this dog; it was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear :
When from the pillow where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus thrust its way
Right sudden against my face, two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine, a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray !
I started first as some Arcadian
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove,
But as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN,
Who by low creatures leads to heights of love.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank of sky, we might grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls ; but since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop,
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted
And like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn and thou unshod
To meet the flints? At least it may be said,
'Because the way is *short*, I thank Thee, God.'

FUTURITY.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

AND, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven, to hold our idols : and albeit
He brake them to our faces and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light:

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
1809—1861.

THE woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad or barcarole ;
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax ; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident control,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus, swift and stedfast,—thus intent and strong ;
While thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
'I love her for her smile—her look—her way
Of speaking gently,—for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day.'—
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby !
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
1809—1861.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length, and say,
'Take it,' My day of youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more: it only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.
—
1809—1861.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Would'st thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . . so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range;
Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven for earth with thee!

FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

ELIZABETH
BARRETT
BROWNING.

1809—1861.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise ;
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life !—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

THE MASTER'S CALL.

HENRY
ALFORD.

1810—1871.

RISE, said the Master, come unto the feast :—
She heard the call and rose with willing feet ;
But thinking it not otherwise than meet
For such a bidding to put on her best,
She is gone from us for a few short hours
Into her bridal closet, there to wait
For the unfolding of the palace-gate,
That gives her entrance to the blissful bowers.
We have not seen her yet, though we have been
Full often to her chamber-door, and oft
Have listened underneath the postern green,
And laid fresh flowers, and whispered short and soft ;
But she hath made no answer ; and the day
From the clear west is fading fast away.

A LOVER'S WISH.

ARTHUR H.
HALLAM.
1811—1833.

OH blessing and delight of my young heart,
Maiden who was so lovely and so pure,
I know not in what region now thou art,
Or whom thy gentle eyes in joy assure.
Not the old hills on which we gazed together,
Not the old faces which we both did love,
Not the old books whence knowledge we did gather,
Not these, but others now thy fancies move.
I would I knew thy present hopes and fears,
All thy companions, with their pleasant talk,
And the clear aspect which thy dwelling wears ;
So, though in body absent, I might walk
With thee in thought and feeling, till thy mood
Did sanctify mine own to peerless good.

AN INVITATION.

ARTHUR H.
HALLAM.
1811—1833.

LADY, I bid thee to a sunny dome,
Ringing with echoes of Italian song :
Henceforth to thee these magic halls belong,
And all the pleasant place is like a home:
Hark, on the right with full piano tone
Old Dante's voice encircles all the air ;
Hark yet again, like flute-notes mingling rare,
Comes the keen sweetness of Petrarca's moan.
Pass thou the lintel freely ; without fear
Feast on the music. I do better know thee,
Than to suspect this pleasure thou dost owe me
Will wrong thy gentle spirit, or make less dear
That element whence thou must draw thy life,—
An English maiden and an English wife.

A LOVER'S HOPE.

ARTHUR H.
HALLAM.

1811—1833.

SPEED ye, warm hours, along th' appointed path,
Speed, though ye bring but pain, slow pain to me ;
I will not much bemoan your heavy wrath,
So ye will make my lady glad and free,
What is't that I must here confinèd be,
If she may roam the summer's sweets among,
See the full cupped flower, the laden tree,
Hear from deep groves the thousand voiced song?
Sometimes in that still chamber will she sit
Trim ranged with books, and cool with dusky blinds,
That keep the moon out, there as seemèd fit,
To sing, or play, or read,—what sweet hope finds
Way to my heart? perchance some verse of mine—
Oh happy I! speed on, ye hours divine !

TO MY MOTHER.

WILLIAM
CALDWELL
ROSCOE.

1823—1859.

As winter in some mild autumnal days,
Breathes such an air as youngest spring discloses,
So age in thee renews an infant's grace,
And clothes thy cheek in soft November roses.
Time hath made friends with Beauty in thy face,
And since the wheeling Fates must be obeyed,
White rime upon thy gracious head he lays,
Put whispers gently not to be afraid ;
And tenderly, like one that leads the blind,
He soothes thy lingering footsteps to the gate,
While that great Angel, who there keeps his state,
Smiles to behold with what slow feet he moves.
Move slower, gentlier yet, O Time ! or find
A way to fix her here, bound by our filial loves.

A LOVER'S FEAR.

WILLIAM
CALDWELL
ROSCOE.

1823—1859.

LIKE a musician that with flying finger
Startles the voice of some new instrument,
And though he know that in one string are blent
All its extremes of sound, yet still doth linger
Among the lighter threads, fearing to start
The deep soul of that one melodious wire,
Lest it, unanswering, dash his high desire,
And spoil the hopes of his expectant heart ;—
Thus, with my mistress oft conversing, I
Stir every lighter theme with careless voice,
Gathering sweet music and celestial joys
From the harmonious soul o'er which I fly ;
Yet o'er the one deep master-chord I hover,
And dare not stoop, fearing to tell—I love her.

TO A FRIEND.

WILLIAM
CALDWELL
ROSCOE.

1823—1859.

SAD soul, whom God resuming what He gave,
Medicines with bitter anguish of the tomb,
Cease to oppress the portals of the grave,
And strain thy aching sight across the gloom.
The surged Atlantic's winter-beaten wave
Shall sooner pierce the purpose of the wind
Than thy storm-tossed and heavy-swelling mind
Grasp the full import of His means to save.
Through the dark night lie still ; God's faithful grace
Lies hid, like morning, underneath the sea,
Let thy slow hours roll, like these weary stars
Down to the level ocean patiently ;
Till His loved hand shall touch the Eastern bars,
And His full glory shine upon thy face.

DAYBREAK IN FEBRUARY.

WILLIAM
CALDWELL
ROSCOE.
—
1823—1859.

OVER the ground white snow, and in the air
Silence. The stars, like lamps soon to expire,
Gleam tremblingly ; serene and heavenly fair,
The eastern hanging crescent climbeth higher.
See, purple on the azure softly steals,
And Morning, faintly touched with quivering fire,
Leans on the frosty summits of the hills,
Like a young girl over her hoary sire.
Oh, such a dawning over me has come,
The daybreak of thy purity and love ;—
The sadness of the never-satiate tomb
Thy countenance hath power to remove ;
And from the sepulchre of Hope thy palm
Can roll the stone, and raise her bright and calm.

RETROSPECT.

WILLIAM
CALDWELL
ROSCOE.

1823—1859.

THE bubble of the silver-springing waves,
Castalian music, and that flattering sound,
Low rustling of the loved Apollian leaves,
With which my youthful hair was to be crowned,
Grow dimmer in my ears ; white Beauty grieves
Over her votary, less frequent found,—
And, not untouched by storms, my life-boat heaves
Through the splashed ocean-waters, outward bound.
And as the leaning mariner, his hand
Clasped on his ear, strives trembling to reclaim
Some loved lost echo from the fleeting strand,
So lean I back to the poetic land ;
And in my heart a sound, a voice, a name
Hangs, as above the lamp hangs the expiring flame.

AD MATREM, MARCH 13, 1862.

JULIAN
FANE.

1827—1870.

OFT in the after-days, when thou and I
Have fallen from the scope of human view,
When, both together, under the sweet sky
We sleep beneath the daisies and the dew,
Men will recall thy gracious presence bland,
Conning the pictured sweetness of thy face ;
Will pore o'er paintings by thy plastic hand,
And vaunt thy skill, and tell thy deeds of grace ;
Oh, may they then, who crown thee with true bays,
Saying, ' What love unto her son she bore !'
Make this addition to thy perfect praise,
' Nor ever yet was mother worshipt more !'
So shall I live with thee, and thy dear fame
Shall link my love unto thine honoured name.

AD MATREM, MARCH 13, 1863.

JULIAN
FANE.

1827—1870.

OH, what a royalty of song should greet
The unclouded advent of thy natal day !
All things of musical utterance should meet
In concord of a many-sounding lay ;
Let the proud trumpet tongue thy noble praise,
The rolling drum reverberate thy fame,
Let fifes and flutes their fluttering voices raise,
And the glad cymbals tinkle to thy name ;
Let the clear horn pay tribute to thy truth,
The deep-based viol tenderly intone
Thy womanly pity and large heart of ruth ;
But of my love let my voice sing alone :
Theme to my jealous lips most dear, most meet,
If that my voice, to voice it, were more sweet.

AD. MATREM, MARCH 13, 1864.

JULIAN
FARE.

1827—1870.

MUSIC, and frankincense of flowers, belong
To this sweet festival of all the year.
Take then the latest blossom of my song,
And to Love's canticle incline thine ear.
What is it that Love chaunts? thy perfect praise.
What is it that Love prays? worthy to prove.
What is it Love desires? thy length of days.
What is it that Love asks? return of love.
Ah, what requital can Love ask more dear
Than by Love's priceless self to be repaid?
Thy liberal love, increasing year by year,
Hath granted more than all my heart hath prayed,
And, prodigal as Nature, makes me pine
To think how poor my love compared with thine.

AD MATREM, MARCH 13, 1870.

I.

JULIAN
FANE.

1827—1870.

WHEN the vast heaven is dark with ominous clouds,
That lower their gloomful faces to the earth ;
When all things sweet and fair are cloaked in shrouds,
And dire calamity and care have birth ;
When furious tempests strip the woodland green,
And from bare boughs the hapless songsters sing ;
When Winter stalks, a spectre, on the scene,
And breathes a blight on every living thing ;
Then, when the spirit of man, by sickness tried,
Half fears, half hopes, that Death be at his side,
Outleaps the sun, and gives him life again.
O mother, I clasped Death ; but, seeing thy face,
Leapt from his dark arms to thy dear embrace.

AD MATREM, MARCH 13, 1870.

II.

JULIAN
FANE.

1827—1870.

So, like a wanderer from the world of shades,
Back to the firm earth and familiar skies,
Back to that light of love that never fades—
The unbroken sunshine of thy blissful eyes,
I come—to greet thee on this happy day
That lets a fresh pearl on thy life appear ;
That decks thy jewelled age with fresh array,
Of good deeds done within the circled year ;
So art thou robed in majesty of grace,
In regal purple of pure womanhood ;
Throned in thy high pre-eminence of place ;
Sceptred and crowned a very Queen of Good.
Receive my blessing, perfect as thou art,
Queen of all good, and sovereign of my heart.

TO ROBERT BUCHANAN.

DAVID
GRAY.

1838—1861.

Now, while the long-delaying ash assumes
Its delicate April green, and loud and clear
Through the cool, yellow, mellow twilight glooms,
The thrush's song enchants the captive ear :
Now, while a shower is pleasant in the falling,
Stirring the still perfume that shakes around ;
Now that doves mourn, and from the distance calling,
The cuckoo answers with a sovereign sound—
Come, with thy native heart, O true and tried !
But leave all books ; for what with converse high,
Flavoured with Attic wit, the time shall glide
On smoothly, as a river floweth by,
Or, as on stately pinion, through the gray
Evening, the culver cuts his liquid way !

IN THE SHADOWS.

DAVID
GRAY.

1838—1861.

DIE down, O dismal day ! and let me live.
And come, blue deeps ! magnificently strewn
With coloured clouds—large, light, and fugitive—
By upper winds through pompous motions blown.
Now it is death in life—a vapour dense
Creeps round my window, till I cannot see
The far snow-shining mountains, and the glens
Shagging the mountain-sides. O God ! make free
This barren, shackled earth, so deathly cold—
Breathe gently forth Thy Spring, till Winter flies
In rude amazement, fearful and yet bold
While she performs her 'customed charities.
I weigh the loaded hours till life is bare—
O God ! for one clear day, a snowdrop, and sweet air !

IN THE SHADOWS.

DAVID
GRAY.

1838—1861.

If it must be ; if it must be, O God !
That I die young, and make no further moans ;
If underneath the unrespective sod,
In unescutcheoned privacy, my bones
Must crumble soon,—then give me strength to bear
The last convulsive throe of too sweet breath !
I tremble from the edge of life, to dare
The dark and fatal leap, having no faith,
No glorious yearning for the Apocalypse.
But like a child that in the night-time cries
For light, I cry ; forgetting the eclipse
Of knowledge, and our human destinies.
O peevish and uncertain soul ! obey
The law of life in patience till the Day.

IN THE SHADOWS.

DAVID
GRAY.

1838—1861.

OCTOBER's gold is dim—the forests rot,
The weary rain falls ceaseless, while the day
Is wrapped in damp. In mire of village way
The hedge-row leaves are stamped ; and all forgot
The broodless nest sits visible in the thorn.
Autumn, among her drooping marigolds,
Weeps all her garnered fields, her empty folds,
And dripping orchards—plundered and forlorn.
The season is a dead one, and I die !
No more, no more for me the spring shall make
A resurrection in the earth, and shake
The death from out her heart—O God, I die !
The cold throat-mist creeps nearer, till I breathe
Corruption. Drop, stark night, upon my death !

A LOVER'S WEALTH.

ALEXANDER
SMITH.
—
1830—1867.

LAST night my cheek was wetted with warm tears,
Each worth a world. They fell from eyes divine.
Last night a loving lip was pressed to mine,
And at its touch fled all the barren years ;
And softly couched upon a bosom white,
Which came and went beneath me like a sea,
An emperor I lay in empire bright,
Lord of the beating heart ; while tenderly
Love-words were glutting my love-greedy ears.
Kind Love, I thank thee for that happy night !
Richer this cheek with those warm tears of thine
Than the vast midnight with its gleaming spheres.
Leander toiling through the midnight brine,
Kingdomless Anthony, were scarce my peers.

WINTER NIGHTS.

ALEXANDER
SMITH.

1830—1867.

SHEATHED is the river as it glideth by,
Frost-pearled are all the boughs in forests old,
The sheep are huddling close upon the wold,
And over them the stars tremble on high.
Pure joys these winter nights around me lie ;
'Tis fine to loiter through the lighted street
At Christmas time, and guess from brow and pace
The doom and history of each one we meet,
What kind of heart beats in each dusky case ;
Whiles startled by the beauty of a face
In a shop-light a moment. Or instead,
To dream of silent fields where calm and deep
The sunshine lieth like a golden sleep—
Recalling sweetest looks of Summers dead.

NATURE AND FRIENDSHIP.

ALEXANDER
SMITH.

1830—1867.

BEAUTY still walketh on the earth and air,
Our present sunsets are as rich in gold
As ere the Iliad's music was out-rolled;
The roses of the Spring are ever fair,
'Mong branches green still ring-doves coo and pair,
And the deep sea still foams its music old.
So, if we are at all divinely souled,
This beauty will unloose our bonds of care.
'Tis pleasant when blue skies are o'er us bending
Within old starry-gated Poesy,
To meet a soul set to no worldly tune,
Like thine, sweet Friend! Oh, dearer this to me
Than are the dewy trees, the sun, the moon,
Or noble music with a golden ending.

NOTES.

In these Notes the Editor has occasionally made use, with the permission of the Proprietors, of a paper written by him, entitled "The English Sonnet," and published in the *Cornhill Magazine*, May, 1872.

NOTES..

EARL OF
SURREY.

Pp. 1-3.

"In the sonnets of Surrey we are surprised to find nothing of that metaphysical cast which marks the Italian poets, his supposed masters, especially Petrarch. Surrey's sentiments are for the most part natural and unaffected ; arising from his own feelings and dictated by the present circumstances. His poetry is alike unembarrassed by learned allusions or elaborate conceits."

—*Warton.*

The earliest of our sonnetteers, Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey—friends in life as well as in the art they practised—acknowledged Petrarch as their master, and the latter, who has been termed "the English Petrarch," deserves attention for the harmony of his versification as well as for his originality of thought. Surrey was a mere boy when he was married to Lady Frances Vere, and much of the love that finds utterance in his verse is doubtless for the wife of his youth. He had besides a poetical mistress, the Lady Geraldine, whose name is almost as familiar to English ears as that of Petrarch's Laura ; but since Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, the Geraldine of the poet, was a child at the time when Surrey, a married man, professed to be dying for her love, it is evident that the fair girl had no real place in his affections. It was like the pretty love-making of Prior "To a Child of Quality." Indeed, the remark made by Mr. Henry Morley on the great sonnet writers of Italy will apply with equal truth to very much of the love poetry of our early English poets. "So far were the poets of those days from

EARL OF
SURREY.

Continued.

looking for a personal and literal interpretation of the customary variations on the proper theme of courtly song, that—as Dante never sang to the world his love for wife or mother, and as Petrarch never addressed a line in public to the mother of his children—so also, throughout the singing of their time, the public homage to a fair lady by any courtly poet seems to have implied usually or always, not that there were, but that there were not private relations of familiar love between them.”—*English Writers*, vol. ii. part i. p. 36. We may add that if it be true as has been suspected, that the deadly hate of King Henry VIII. was roused against Surrey by his sonnet *On Sardanapalus*, the might wielded by the sonnet writer was early and fatally appreciated. “Drenched in sloth and womanish delight, feeble o spirit, impatient of pain,” and enervated by “filthy lusts tha stained his regal heart,”—these are some of the terms used with regard to the Assyrian monarch which Henry might have fitly applied to himself. Surrey’s close friend, Wyatt, also seems to have aimed a blow at the King and his court in his satire addressed to John Poins, and imitated from the then popular Italian poet Alamanni. Wyatt was a nobleman of large acquisitions and splendid virtues, a man whose name, like that of Surrey, is associated with all that is chivalric and noble and of good report in the reign of Henry VIII. But Wyatt, apparently wrote verse not from inspiration, but because it was a court fashion, and his sonnets are too crude and quaint to suit modern ears. The following, however, which is supposed to refer to his “platonic affection” for Anne Boleyn possesses an interest for this reason:—

Whoso list to hunt? I know where is an hind!
But as for me, alas! I may no more,
The vain travail hath wearied me so sore;
I am of them that furthest come behind,

EARL OF
SURREY.
Continued.

Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
Draw from the deer ; but as she fleeth afore,
Fainting I follow ; I leave off, therefore,
Since in a net I seek to hold the wind.
Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,—
As well as I, may spend his time in vain !
And graven with diamonds in letters plain,
There is written her fair neck round about :
' Noli me tangere ' ; for Cæsar's I am,
And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.'

In the Phoenix Nest, which was published in London in 1593, a sonnet written by an anonymous writer bears a curious resemblance to Surrey's sonnet "Set me whereas the sun doth parch the green," but it will be seen that the copy does not equal the original.

Set me where Phœbus' heat the flowers slayeth,
Or where continual snow withstands his forces ;
Set me where he his temperate rays displayeth,
Or where he comes, or where he never courses.
Set me in Fortune's grace, or else discharged,
In sweet and pleasant air, or dark and glooming,
Where days and nights are lesser or enlarged,
In years of strength, in failing age or blooming.
Set me in heaven, or earth, or in the centre ;
Low in a vale, or on a mountain placed ;
Set me to danger, peril, and adventure,
Graced by fame or infamy disgraced :
Set me to these or any other trial,
Except my Mistress' anger and denial.

SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY.
—
Pp. 4—7.

"Amongst the first English sonnets perhaps those of Sir P. Sidney are the most valuable. Some of them are very admirable. They only suffer occasionally from the want of a more unbroken harmony of versification which the imperfectly developed condition of the language at that time scarcely afforded room to remedy."—*Quarterly Review* (Art., The Sonnet, January, 1873).

SIR PHILIP
SIDNEY.
Continued.

The fine sonnet, so characteristic of its noble author, commencing "Having this day my horse, my hand, my lance," has called forth another from the pen of Thomas Hood, which is deserving of quotation here:—

Rare composition of a Poet-Knight,
Most chivalrous amongst chivalric men,
Distinguished for a polished lance and pen,
In tuneful contests and the tourney-fight;
Lustrous in scholarship, in honour bright,
Accomplished in all graces current then,
Humane as any in historic ken,
Brave, handsome, noble, affable, polite,
Most courteous to that race, become of late
So fiercely scornful of all kind advance,
Rude, bitter, coarse, implacable in hate
To Albion, plotting ever her mischance—
Alas! fair Verse, how false and out of date
Thy phrase "sweet enemy" applied to France.

THOMAS
WATSON.
Page 8.

Extravagant imagery, and a laboured attempt at passion, mark the love poems of Watson, whom Steevens considered a "much more elegant sonneteer" than Shakespeare. One of his sonnets is inserted in this collection not for its intrinsic worth, but as a fair specimen of a once popular series. His poems illustrate forcibly enough the weak side of a great literary age. Watson writes like a scholar and a gentleman, but his poetry is fantastical and overladen with conceits. Mr. Arber, to whom the public is indebted for a careful reprint of this old writer, ranks Watson before Sidney as a poet,—a judgment in which few critics will agree with him.

EDMUND
SPENSER.
Pp. 9—18.

Spenser's sonnets, eighty-eight in number, and entitled "Amoretti," sing the cruelty and charms of his mistress in the artificial style so frequently adopted in that age. Her beauty is

EDMUND
SPENSER.
Continued.

dissected in fantastical phraseology ; her eyes, her teeth, her breath, her smile, her frown, are compared with lightning, with pearls, with the scent of flowers, with sunshine, with storms. The hardest steel wears in time, he says, but nothing can soften her hard heart : the lion disdains to devour the lamb, but she, more savage wild, "taketh glory in her cruelty ;" she is a new Pandora, sent to scourge mankind ; she is an angler, catching weak hearts and then killing them with cruel pride ; she is like a panther, who allures other beasts with his beauty and then preys upon them. At the same time, she is her lover's sovereign saint, the idol of his thoughts, born of the brood of angels, the Fairest Fair, who contains within herself all the world's riches, and whose bosom is—

" The nest of Love, the lodging of Delight,
The bower of Bliss, the paradise of Pleasure."

Spenser's biographers, like Shakspeare's, in the dearth of much actual knowledge of the poet, have searched his sonnets for additional information. The pursuit is alluring but dangerous. Spenser courted his divinity at the mature age of forty, and one feels sure that at that age no man would undergo in reality the agonies Spenser endured *in verse* for the sake of an obdurate mistress. It is indeed evident that the larger portion of these love poems, written as they are in the conventional diction of the period, must be chiefly regarded as clever exercises in verse. His heart was not in them, as it is in the "Epithalamium," the loveliest of all lovely songs, which he sang upon the eve of his marriage. Leigh Hunt observes that Spenser was the first man who studiously set aside the Italian pattern of the sonnet, and adds, that the form he invented in its stead appears to have been the result of repeated experiments. This form, it will be observed, consists of three quatrains

EDMUND
SPENSER.
Continued.

and a couplet, the quatrains being linked together with a line out of each. "This form of sonnet never became popular. It is surely not so happy as that of the Italian sonnet. The rhyme seems at once less responsive and always interfering; and the music has no longer its major and minor divisions."

SIR WALTER
RALEIGH.
Page 19.

"A higher strain of compliment cannot well be conceived than this which raises your idea even of that which it disparages in the comparison, and makes you feel that nothing could have torn the writer from his idolatrous enthusiasm for Petrarch and his Laura's tomb, but Spenser's magic verses and diviner *Fairy Queen*—the one lifted above mortality, the other brought from the skies!"—*Hazlitt*.

"The sonnet is of the least artistical order as to construction, consisting only of the three elegiac quatrains and a couplet, and it has the fault of monotonous assonance in the rhymes; yet it flows with such nerve and will, and is so dashing and sounding in the rest of its modulation, that no impression remains upon the mind but that of triumphant force."—*Leigh Hunt*.

"This sonnet is the first amongst the commendatory poems prefixed to the original edition of *The Fairy Queen*. As original in conception as it is grand in execution, it is about the finest compliment which was ever paid by poet to poet, such as it became Raleigh to indite and Spenser to receive. Yet it labours under a serious defect. The great poets of the past lose no whit of their glory because later poets are found worthy to share it. Petrarch in his lesser and Homer in his greater sphere are just as illustrious since Spenser appeared as before."—*Archbishop Trench*.

HENRY
CONSTABLE.

Pp. 20—23.

Like other of the Elizabethan sonnetteers, Constable celebrated the beauty of Lady Rich and puns upon her name; he praises also with much warmth Sir P. Sidney's sister, the Countess of Pembroke, and his wife, afterwards Countess of Essex. Constable was a Roman Catholic, and was banished for political intrigues by the government of Elizabeth. An edition of "*Diana: The Praises of his Mistres in certaine sweete Sonnets,*" was published in 1597, and his "*ambrosiac Muse*" received the praises of Ben Jonson. Constable's love sonnets, although disfigured, as will be seen from the four selected, by the conceits of the age, are not without melody and genuine feeling, and we cannot agree with the late Mr. Robert Bell that they are "infinitely inferior" to those of Surrey and Wyatt; but the "*Spirituell Sonnettes,*" with which he is credited, are well-nigh contemptible. Those written by his contemporary, Barnaby Barnes (born about 1569), are of greater merit and deserve recognition for profound devotional feeling. His sonnets may be termed collects in verse. Contrition, adoration, gratitude, faith—in short the highest Christian virtues are exhibited in these devout poems, but the "*Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets,*" describe the inner life of a religious man, and the sentiment expressed in them is more to be commended than the poetry. A similar criticism must be passed on the "*Sundry Sonnets of Christian Passions*" (more than three hundred in number), written about the same period by Henry Lok, which have been carefully reproduced of late by the Rev. Alexander B. Grosart. The weary toil of reading these pious but monotonous effusions is for the poetical student labour well-nigh thrown away. Not a single flash of genius lights up the gloomy pathway. The writer exhibits a command of language and an ease of versification remarkable for the period, but his dullness is invincible, binding him hand and foot,

HENRY
CONSTABLE.
Continued.

and leaving him in ignorance of his fetters. There is doubtless genuine sincerity in these poems, but we cannot detect in them the bird-like snatches of real singing for which Mr. Grosart gives them credit. The editor has been unable to find one sonnet, out of the large number written by Barnes and Lok that is adapted to a collection like this.

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

Pp. 24—52.

“There is extant a small volume of miscellaneous poems in which Shakespeare expresses his own feelings in his own person. It is not difficult to conceive that the editor, George Steevens, should have been insensible to the beauties of one portion of that volume, the Sonnets, though in no part of the writings of this poet is found, in an equal compass, a greater number of exquisite feelings felicitously expressed.”—*Wordsworth*.

“These Sonnets, like the Venus and Adonis, and the Rape of Lucrece, are characterised by boundless fertility and laboured condensation of thought, with perfection of sweetness in rhythm and metre.”—*Coleridge*.

“Notwithstanding the frequent beauties of these Sonnets . . . it is impossible not to wish that Shakespeare had never written them. There is a weakness and folly, in all excessive and misplaced affection which is not redeemed by the touches of nobler sentiments which abound in this long series of sonnets.”—*Hallam*.

“A poet’s story differs from a narrative in being in itself a creation. It brings its own facts with it. What we have to ask is not the true life of Laura, but how far Petrarch has truly drawn the life of love. So with the Sonnets. Their dates, objects, and circumstances of publication belong only to the prose of the matter. These history must be looked for within. And when we study this, we can hardly understand, we cannot

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

Continued.

enter into the strange series of feelings which they paint ; we cannot understand how our great and gentle Shakespeare could have submitted himself to such passions ; we have hardly courage to think that he really endured them. Yet reality appears stamped on the Sonnets, not less forcibly than the mythical character upon the autobiography of Dante's early days. It would seem as if he who had formed or fathomed the hearts of the beings whom he called into life with a power beyond that of all other men, had intended here to reveal to us the depths of his own, in a drama more tragic than the madness of *Lear*, or the agonies of *Othello* . . . There is after all nothing more remarkable or fascinating in English poetry than these personal revelations of the mind of our greatest poet. We read them again and again, and find each time some new proof of his almost superhuman insight into human nature : of his unrivalled mastery over all the tones of love."—*F. T. Palgrave.*

Shakespeare's "Divine Sonnets" open, as all students know, a wide and difficult discussion. These poems have bewildered some of our greatest writers ; they have called forth some of the most grotesque opinions ever uttered on a matter of literary criticism ; they have exercised the infinite ingenuity of commentators, and they have led to inferences with regard to the poet's personal character which will not readily be admitted by those who believe as much in Shakespeare's moral greatness as in his transcendent genius. A German critic regards the Sonnets as allegorical ; a recent writer treats them as a burlesque on "Mistress sonnetting ;" another maintains that the two Loves of sonnet 144, are the Celibate Church and the Reformed Church, while an American critic asserts that these poems are hermetic writings, and that the passion uttered in them is expressed for the Divine Being. "Beauty's Rose," mentioned in the first sonnet, is the spirit of humanity, and the "Master-

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

Continued.

Mistress" of the poet's passion, addressed in the twentieth, means simply the writer's inward nature as influenced by the reason and the affections which are alluded to by Shakespeare elsewhere under the figure of his mistress's eyes. The word love, we are told, as used in the Sonnets, must, in the main be understood as religious love ; and, in fact, the poems are mystical throughout, having one meaning for the eye and another for the heart. The climax of folly is perhaps reached in the following passage. "In the hundred and fifty-third sonnet, *Cupid* signifies love in a religious sense ; the *Maid of Dian* is a *virgin* truth of nature ; the *cold valley-fountain* is the letter of the law, called a cool well in the hundred and fifty-fourth sonnet ; and truth we all know is said to be at the bottom of a well ! " Readers who prefer taking a less exalted view of these extraordinary productions, will find much to interest them in Mr. Gerald Massey's elaborate and ingenious essay, "The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets Unfolded,"—the most exhaustive work on the subject that has been, or is ever likely to be written. It will suffice to mention here the gist of Mr. Massey's argument. He maintains that the greater number of the Sonnets are dramatic and not personal, that some were written for the Earl of Southampton, some for Elizabeth Vernon, some for Lord Herbert, and that the passionate feeling expressed in them is the utterance of the dramatist Shakespeare rather than of the man Shakespeare. We cannot attempt the discussion of this theory in a note, but we may briefly say that if correct, it does not as the writer supposes, remove the apparent stigma which attaches to Shakespeare as the author. "The true personal application of the latter sonnets," he observes, "is not that Shakespeare was gloomy and guilty enough to write them for himself, but that he had the exuberant jollity, the lax gaiety, to write them for the young gallant Herbert." But the man who in a storm of passion,

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

Continued.

utters what he is feeling, is surely less blameworthy than the man who sits down in cold blood to simulate such passion for his friends. Even Mr. Massey seems to have some suspicion of this truth, for in one place, alluding to the publication of the Sonnets, he writes :—"Shakespeare, I imagine, must have felt some dislike to the Herbert series being included, for he could not but have seen that, however read, they did not reflect any credit on himself." Mr. Massey's interpretation, therefore, while it throws the broad light of day on some points that have been hitherto obscure, does not, with all its ingenuity, remove the chief difficulty out of the reader's path. Moreover, Mr. Massey's argument forces him to place the Sonnets in new combinations, and although considerable ability is shown in the readjustment, it is in the highest degree unlikely that by these violent changes, made to fit a theory, the Sonnets have been shaken into their natural order. His views, however, have proved acceptable to some critics ; and Herr Fritz Krauss, in a recent translation of what he calls "Shakespeare's Southampton-Sonette," accepts Mr. Massey's theory, and follows the order laid down in his volume. "Mir ist," he writes, "durch Massey's Auslegung erst die rechte Freude an den Sonetten aufgegangen, und da sie auch für meinen Zweck die allein befriedigende Grundlage bildet, nehme ich sie ohne Rückhalt an." We may add here that while Mr. Massey holds the present order of the Sonnets to be the result, as it were, of hap-hazard, Mr. Simpson, in his "Philosophy of Shakespeare's Sonnets," affirms that if these poems "are examined in the light of the common sonnet philosophy—of that poetical Platonism which had inspired compositions of this kind ever since their rise—their sequence is quite natural." "Indeed," he adds, "examined in this light they appear to be arranged with rare subtlety and care." As a poet the Sonnets enhance the fame even of Shakespeare ; do

WILLIAM
SHAKE-
SPEARE.

Continued.

they lower the high estimate we should otherwise form of his moral character? This is the question which Mr. Massey's ponderous volume leaves unanswered. Hallam's opinion, it will be seen, was so unfavourable to Shakespeare in this respect that he expressed a wish the sonnets had never been written, a desire in which few will participate; for while there are passages which show, as Hallam justly observes, an "excessive and misplaced affection," the tone of the long series generally is felt to be very noble. And the richness of thought—the enchanting felicity of language, which distinguish the best of the sonnets, make them worthy of the writer and deserving, therefore, of repeated perusals. Hallam thinks they do not please at first, and Archbishop Trench has said finely:—"Shakespeare's sonnets are so heavily laden with meaning, so double-shotted, if one may so speak with thought, so penetrated and pervaded with a repressed passion, that packed as all this is into narrowest limits, it sometimes imparts no little obscurity to them." It follows that the careless reader will gain little pleasure from them, and that their fulness of beauty cannot be appreciated until they have been read and re-read, or, better still, committed to memory. Out of Shakespeare's hundred and fifty-four sonnets, twenty-nine have been chosen, after much deliberation, for this anthology.

SAMUEL
DANIEL.

Page 54.

Samuel Daniel, the author of the well-known couplet quoted by Coleridge in his "Aids to Reflection":—

"— Unless above himself he can
Erect himself, how poor a thing is man,"

has produced a great deal of rugged and vigorous verse, but of his fifty-seven sonnets *To Delia*, the single specimen given in the text will probably satisfy the reader. It is incomparably the best of the series, and the praise given to it in a recent article on

SAMUEL
DANIEL.
Continued.

the Sonnet (*Quarterly Review*, January, 1873) is perhaps not more than its due. For mellifluous tenderness and pensive grace of expression it may rank, says the writer, "amongst the first in the language." In the strain, adopted by so many of our early sonnet-writers, Daniel deplotes the obduracy and disdain of his Mistress:—

"A modest maid decked with a blush of honour,
Whose feet do tread green paths of youth and love."

His Love, however, is, he says, as cruel as she is fair; he reads on her brow the sentence of his death; tears, vows, and prayers, which win the hardest heart, he has spent in vain; yet will he continue to weep, and to vow, and to pray. Nevertheless, he doubts the wisdom of perpetuating her praise in verse when she thus flouts him:—

"Why should I sing in verse; why should I frame
These sad neglected notes for her dear sake?
Why should I offer up unto her name,
The sweetest sacrifice my youth can make?
Why should I strive to make her live for ever,
That never deigns to give me joy to live?"

Southey called Daniel "the tenderest of all tender poets"—a eulogy which he could hardly have justified as a critic; but the delight received by a poet from a poet's work is often independent of its intrinsic value.

MICHAEL
DRAYTON.
Page 55.

Sir Walter Scott in his "Life of Dryden," makes the extraordinary assertion, that Drayton, though less known than Spenser, "possessed, perhaps, equal powers of poetry." No one who has wandered with Spenser through his Faery land to the sound of exquisite music, seeing visions such as few poets have dreamed of, and none described with such prodigal felicity of language, and has then trudged painfully along the by-ways of England, although not without compensation for the toil, with the

MICHAEL
DRAYTON.
Continued.

poet of the *Poly-Olbion*, can compare the two for a moment. Yet Drayton has many merits of no mean order. In his *Baron Wars* he is a vigorous and often picturesque chronicler in verse; in his *Nymphidia* he exhibits a delightful play of fancy, and his *Battle of Agincourt* has as much vigour as any war lyric in the language. His sonnets have little beauty, and we might accept Leigh Hunt's assertion, that they are all destitute of poetry, were it not for the sonnet quoted in our selection, which we venture to think is so remarkable for imagery and tender feeling, as to deserve a place among the loveliest poems of its class.

GEORGE
HERBERT.
Pp. 58, 59.

Of the sonnet on "Sin," Coleridge remarks, in his "Biographia Literaria," that it is equally admirable for the weight, number, and expression of the thoughts, and for the simple dignity of the language—unless indeed a fastidious taste should object to the latter half of the sixth line.

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.
Pp. 60—67.

"Drummond's sonnets are in the highest degree elegant, harmonious, and striking. It appears to me, that they are more in the manner of Petrarch than any other that we have, with a certain intenseness in the sentiment, an occasional glitter of thought, and uniform terseness of expression. . . . I cannot but think that his sonnets come as near as almost any others to the perfection of this kind of writing, which should embody a sentiment and every shade of a sentiment, as it varies with time and place and humour, with the extravagance or lightness of a momentary expression, and should, when lengthened out into a series, form a history of the wayward moods of the poet's mind, the turns of his fate, and imprint the smile or frown of his mistress in indelible characters on the scattered leaves."—*Hazlitt*.

"Perhaps most readers will agree with Hallam in thinkin

WILLIAM
DRUMMOND.
Continued.

that the sonnets of Drummond have obtained quite as much praise as they deserve. They are not written in the best form, but near enough to it to be disappointing. Many of them are mere slavish imitations of Petrarch, in which all the finer qualities of his great master are lost."—*Quarterly Review* (Art., The Sonnet, *January*, 1873).

We differ unwillingly from a critic so distinguished as M. Taine, but when he calls Drummond "a vigorous and malicious pedant, who has marred Ben Jonson's ideas, and vilified his character," we are bound to say that in our opinion this harsh judgment cannot be sustained by an impartial estimate of the *Notes*. It should be remembered, too, that Drummond had no hand in the publication. Is it possible that M. Taine took his cue from Gifford, who writes wildly on the subject, instead of exercising his own judgment?

JOHN
MILTON.
Pp. 68—77.

"The sonnets of Milton have obtained of late years the admiration of all real lovers of poetry. . . Johnson has been as impotent to fix the public taste in this instance, as in his other criticisms, on the smaller poems of the author of "Paradise Lost." These sonnets are, indeed, unequal; the expression is sometimes harsh, and sometimes obscure, sometimes too much of pedantic allusion interferes with the sentiment, nor am I reconciled to his frequent deviations from the best Italian structure. But such blemishes are lost in the majestic simplicity, the holy calm, that ennoble many of these short compositions."—*Hallam*.

Milton's English Sonnets (he wrote several in Italian, which have been warmly praised by Italian critics,) are eighteen in number, and were composed at different periods of his life. In all of them he has partially maintained the legitimate form, and it is note-worthy, that only upon one occasion, namely, in the *Address*

JOHN
MILTON.
Continued.

to *Cromwell*, has he concluded the sonnet with a couplet. Milton had an exquisite ear, and proved himself in the *Paradise Lost* the most accomplished master of harmony this country has produced. His sonnets, however, while conspicuous for majesty of thought may be thought defective in rhythm. Yet Milton, no doubt felt what the critical reader of his poetry must feel, that a severe dignity, or what may be in some instances called a baldness of style, is appropriate to the themes he has selected. Some of the sonnets express in manly language the feelings of his heart; in some of them he gives utterance to his political faith, not on perhaps but has a distinct value in the history of his life. So far from being unworthy of his mighty genius, as Dr. Johnson thought, when he told Hannah More that Milton could "cut Colossus from a rock, but could not carve heads upon chert stones," these short poems are gems of almost priceless value. "Soul-animating strains," says Wordsworth, and in these words describes their character with the utmost precision.

BENJAMIN
STILLING-
FLEET.
Page 78.

The author of this sonnet, the grandson of Bishop Stillingfleet was well known in the literary assemblies which Mrs. Montagu, Mrs. Ord, and Mrs. Vesey made so famous soon after the middle of the last century, and from him the "Blue Stockings" derived their title, for Stillingfleet's stockings being of the colour, Admiral Boscawen called the assembly of these friends the Blue Stocking Society. Dr. Doran, in his amusing volume "A Lady of the Last Century," states that the name was given to all assemblies where ladies presided and scholars were welcomed.

THOMAS
GRAY.
Page 79.

Both Wordsworth and Coleridge have found fault with Gray's sonnet on Richard West, asserting that the diction is artificial and the images incongruous. Leigh Hunt, on the contrary, de

THOMAS
GRAY.
Continued.

fends it on the same ground that he would defend the *Lycidas* of Milton, and avers that men so imbued with the classics can speak from their hearts in such language. Gray was a purist, but he never threw off entirely the conventional phraseology which was at one time regarded as the language of poetry. His odes, for example, abound with terms which a third-rate poet of our day would reject as turgid or artificial, but we think with Hunt, that this sonnet, the only one Gray ever produced, is very beautiful, and that the allusion in it to Phœbus may be justified. "We are too much in the habit," he writes, "of losing a living notion of the sun. . . . Phœbus in this instance, is not a word out of the dictionaries, but a living celestial presence."

THOMAS
WARTON.
—
Pp. 81—82.

"His sonnets have been highly and deservedly commended by no less competent a judge than Mr. Coleridge. They are alone sufficient to prove (if any proof were wanting) that this form of composition is not unsuited to our language."—*Rev. H. F. Cary.*

"Lamb praised T. Warton's sonnet in Dugdale as of first-rate excellence."—*H. C. Robinson.*

WILLIAM
COWPER.
—
Pp. 83—84.

Mr. Palgrave observes that he knows no sonnet more remarkable than this (p. 83), and adds with a fine appreciation of this exquisite poem, and of the high place that Cowper occupies amongst our poets:—"Petrarch's Sonnets have a more ethereal grace, and a more perfect finish; Shakespeare's more passion; Milton's stand supreme in stateliness, Wordsworth's in depth and delicacy. But Cowper unites with an exquisiteness in the turn of thought which the ancients would have called Irony, an intensity of pathetic tenderness, peculiar to his loving and ingenuous nature: There is much mannerism, much that is unimportant, or of now exhausted interest in his poems; but where he is great, it is with

WILLIAM
COWPER.
Continued.

that elementary greatness which rests on the most universal human feelings. Cowper is our highest master in simple pathos.

ANNA
SEWARD.
Page 85.

Miss Seward attained a considerable reputation in her own day and at the beginning of this century was a celebrity at Lichfield. It may be remembered, however, that Walter Savage Landor as independent of authority when a young man as he was all his life through, would not acknowledge this lady's literary position and that probably in consequence of this disregard, she formed a mean estimate of his genius. She called "Gebir" unintelligible fustian, little thinking that the day would shortly come when that poem would be intensely appreciated by the "fit audience" whose favourable judgment is a guarantee of enduring fame, while her own verses would be consigned to the oblivion prepared for mediocrity. Few readers will venture upon the hard task of perusing the hundred sonnets which form a prominent portion of Miss Seward's diffusive verse. Many of them are purely descriptive others are sentimental, but in neither class are there signs of poetical vitality. Natural objects and the human heart are treated in a stilted and unreal diction, which since the time of Wordsworth has passed away for ever. She uses this form of verse to express meagre thoughts and to describe external scenes, but Nature spoke to her but faintly, and has nothing to speak through her. The sonnet we have selected is the best Miss Seward wrote, and describes, not unhappily, a feeling that will be recognised by many early risers. It "was written in an apartment of the west front of the Bishop's Palace at Lichfield inhabited by the author from her thirteenth year."

CHARLOTTE
SMITH.
Page 86.

Charlotte Smith, to judge by her prose account of herself, was an unhappy woman, and the sentimental sonnets on which her small reputation hangs, sound in modern ears frigid and arti-

CHARLOTTE
SMITH.

Continued.

ficial. In one of them she addresses the moon, and hopes soon to reach that "world serene;" in another she implores "balmy sleep" to shed its poppies on her sad temples; in a third, friendship is invoked as a nymph; and in a fourth, fortitude is styled a "nymph of the rocks." There is an address, also, to the Goddess of Botany, another sweet nymph; and there is a petition to the dews of heaven to fall upon her burning breast, and to bathe with cool drops her ever-streaming eyes. If her breast burns, the keenest air is not so cold as her despair: she mourns "in languid, hopeless sorrow," she wanders "cheerless and unblest," she declares that "there's no oblivion but in death alone!"

"Their varied round

The seasons go; while I through all repine:

For fixt regret and hopeless grief are mine."

Mrs. Smith's woe was no doubt real, but the mode in which she expresses her sorrow is marked by affected sentiment and expressed in conventional phraseology. Her contemporaries, however, must have thought otherwise, for the "Elegiac Sonnets" reached the 8th edition before the close of the century. We may add that a modern critic (the Rev. A. Dyce) considers that these sonnets "abound with tenderness, grace, and beauty."

HELEN
MARIA
WILLIAMS.

Page 88.

Miss Williams wrote several sonnets of no remarkable excellence, but that addressed "To Hope," although intrinsically perhaps of no more value than its neighbours, is inserted because it bears the stamp of Wordsworth's approval. In a note to her volume the writer says:—"I commence the sonnets with that 'To Hope,' from a predilection in its favour, for which I have a proud reason; it is that of Mr. Wordsworth, who lately honoured me with his visits while at Paris, having repeated it to me from memory, after a lapse of many years."

SIR
SAMUEL
EGERTON
BRYDGES.

Page 89.

Southey writing to the author of this sonnet says, "I know not any poem, in any language, more beautifully imaginative"—**extravagant praise** which must be set down to Southey's generous, but **not always discriminative appreciation, of contemporary work.**

WILLIAM
LISLE
BOWLES.

Pp. 90—92.

It is scarcely possible to explain the secret of Bowles' wide and rapid popularity at the beginning of this century. We know that his poems possessed a charm for the public, for edition followed edition in quick succession, but we find it difficult to say in what that charm consisted. The sonnets upon which his earliest reputation was founded, are pleasant and plaintive, and show a sensitive and refined nature, but they are weak in thought, and the interest they possess is almost wholly due to the fact that they inspired an infinitely greater poet. It is but fair to the memory of Bowles, that the sonnet addressed to him by S. T. Coleridge, should be inserted here.

My heart has thanked thee, Bowles ! for those soft strains,
Whose sadness soothes me like the murmuring
Of wild bees, in the sunny showers of spring !
For hence, not callous to the mourner's pains
Through youth's gay prime, and thornless paths I went :
And when the mightier throes of mind began,
And drove me forth a thought-bewildered man !
Their mild and manliest melancholy lent
A mingled charm, such as the pang consigned
To slumber, though the big tear it renewed ;
Bidding a strange mysterious pleasure brood
Over the wavy and tumultuous mind,
As the great Spirit erst with plastic sweep
Moved on the darkness of the unformed deep.

THOMAS
RUSSELL.

Page 93.

"The whole of this is exquisite. Nothing can be more like Milton than the close of it. When the first seats are taken by the great masters in the poetical art, we shall often be more

THOMAS
RUSSELL.
Continued.

gratified by those who are contented to place themselves and sing at their feet, than by others whose only ambition is to have a chair of their own."—*Rev. H. F. Cary.*

The Rev. Thomas Russell was a friend of Walter Birch, who is himself best known to the present generation as the friend of Walter Savage Landor. In the *Simonidea*, Landor notices this sonnet as "a poem on Philoctetes by a Mr. Russell, which would authorise him to join the shades of Sophocles and Euripides." Robert Landor states that Russell left only two sonnets, and died of a broken heart. This is a mistake. Russell left sixteen or seventeen original sonnets, and also translated several from the German, Italian, and Portuguese. He was a Fellow of New College, Oxford, and died at Bristol, of a broken heart possibly, but according to his biographer, of a more frequent cause of death—consumption. The sonnet on Philoctetes is by far the finest of his poems, and there is nothing in the remaining sonnets, which were published at Oxford in 1789, to justify Southey's youthful eulogy of the author, whom he terms "the best English sonnet-writer."

WILLIAM
WORDSWORTH.
Pp. 94—119.

"The sonnets (with the exception of the Ecclesiastical series) bear witness more directly, perhaps, than any of Mr. Wordsworth's other writings to a principle which he has asserted of poetical, as strongly as Lord Bacon of physical philosophy—the principle that the Muse is to be the servant and interpreter of Nature. Some fact, transaction, or natural object, gives birth to almost every one of them. He does not search his mind for subjects; he goes forth into the world and they present themselves. His mind lies open to nature with an ever wakeful susceptibility, and an impulse from without will send it far into the regions of thought; but it seldom goes to work upon itself

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

Continued.

. The sonnets have not, like many of the other poems, peculiarities of manner which whilst they charm one reader will baulk another ; they are highly finished compositions, distinguished, as regards the diction, only by an aptitude which can hardly fail to be approved, whatever may be the particular taste of the reader ; and they are at the same time so varied in subject and sentiment, that specimens might be adduced from them of almost every kind of serious poetry to which the sonnet can lend itself."—*Sir Henry Taylor.*

Wordsworth, the greatest of modern poets, is perhaps the greatest of English sonnet writers. Not only has he composed a larger number of sonnets than any other of our poets, he has also written more that are of first-rate excellence. There is no intensity of passion in Wordsworth's sonnets ; and herein he differs from Shakespeare, and from Mrs. Browning for whose sonnets the reader may feel an enthusiastic admiration that Wordsworth's thoughtful and calm verse rarely excites ; neither has he attained the "dignified simplicity" which marks the sonnets of Milton ; but for purity of language, for variety and strength of thought, for the *curiosa felicitas* of poetical diction, for the exquisite skill with which he associates the emotions of the mind and the aspects of nature, we know of no sonnet writer who can take precedence of Wordsworth. In his larger poems his language is sometimes slovenly, and occasionally, as Sir Walter Scott said, he chooses to crawl on all-fours ; but this is rarely the case in the sonnets, and though he wrote upwards of four hundred, there are few, save those on the *Punishment of Death* and some of those called *Ecclesiastical* (for neither argument nor dogma find a fitting place in verse) that we could willingly part with. Wordsworth's belief that the language of the common people may be used as the language of poetry was totally inoperative when he composed a sonnet. He wrote at such

WILLIAM
WORDS-
WORTH.

Continued.

times in the best diction he could command, and the language like the thought is that of a great master. The sonnets embrace almost every theme, except the one to which this branch of the poetical art has been usually dedicated. Some of the noblest are consecrated to liberty, some describe with incomparable felicity the personal feelings of the writer ; some might be termed simply descriptive, were it not that even these are raised above the rank of descriptive poetry by the pure and lofty imagination of the poet. The light that never was on sea or land pervades the humblest of these pieces, and throughout them there is inculcated a cheerful, because divine, philosophy. From such a store-house of poetical wealth it is difficult to draw samples, and no student of Wordsworth can gain an adequate idea of his genius as a sonnet writer from the poems we have selected. All that can be said is, that the twenty-six sonnets comprised in this volume rank with the best he produced. There are none better than these, there are many that are nearly, or perhaps quite, as good.

JOSEPH
BLANCO
WHITE.

Page 123.

S. T. Coleridge declared that this sonnet was the finest and most grandly conceived in our language ; "at least," he added, "it is only in Milton and in Wordsworth that I remember any rival." Leigh Hunt's opinion is equally favourable. "In point of thought," he writes, "the sonnet stands supreme, perhaps above all in any language." Mr. Forster in an interesting account of Blanco White (*Walter Savage Landor, A Biography*, Vol. ii., p. 517) observes, "Perhaps he will be remembered longest for the extraordinary intellectual achievement of having so mastered our language, sometime after he had passed middle life, as to have made it thoroughly his own. He literally recast his mind in an English mould ; after a few years never thought but in English ; wrote an admirable English style, strong and simple ; and is the author of an English sonnet, called "Night

JOSEPH
BLANCO.
WHITE.
Continued.

and Death," of surpassing beauty of expression and subtlety as well as grandeur of thought."

ROBERT
SOUTHEY.
—
Page 124.

Southey, illustrious in so many ways, and deserving, perhaps, even as a poet, more fame than he has won, judged rightly in saying that very few of his sonnets are of any merit. When he adds, "That upon Winter," is, "perhaps the only thoroughly good one," it is evident that he estimated it too highly. It will be safer to say that it is the best Southey has written.

LORD
THURLOW.
—
Page 127.

"A sonnet of stately and thoughtful beauty, one which no anthology of English Sonnets ought henceforward ever to omit."
—*Archbishop Trench.*

In spite of this high eulogium, it is not without some hesitation that the editor has given to this sonnet a place in his selection. The thought expressed is doubtless worthy of commemoration, and the conclusion is admirable; but some of the lines, as for example, the ninth and tenth, are meanly prosaic. It has been well said "the sonnet is a little thing, therefore a little thing serves to ruin it."

FELICIA D.
HEMANS.
—
Pp. 140—142.

The personal charm exercised by Mrs. Hemans is acknowledged by everyone who knew her. She was a lovely woman in misfortune, a woman, too, of high culture, of refined sentiment, and of great natural ability. The facility with which she transmitted her feelings into graceful verse was extraordinary, and many of her short poems, thanks in a measure to the music which preserves them alive, are known to the present generation. Probably a number of her lyrics will always be popular with a certain class of readers, and some of them deserve general admiration;

FELICIA D.
HEMANS.
Continued.

but the writer's more pretentious works are already well nigh forgotten. Wordsworth said, finely, that language or style was the incarnation of thought, and that it was unphilosophical to call it the dress. But in the case of Mrs. Hemans the thought is so frequently unsubstantial that such a term cannot be applied to it. We have the dress, elegant and tasteful enough sometimes, but with very little beneath it. Mrs. Hemans produced a large number of sonnets, chiefly of the illegitimate order. The "Sabbath Sonnet," the last she wrote, was composed a few days before her death.

HARTLEY
COLERIDGE.
PP. 151—160.

"The influence of Wordsworth's peculiar genius is more discernible in the productions of Hartley Coleridge than that of his father, more especially in the sonnets which I venture to think may sustain a comparison with those of the elder writer. Their port is indeed less majestic, they have less dignity of purpose, and, particularly in combination, are less weighty in effect; but, taken as single compositions, they are not less graceful, or less fraught with meaning; they possess a softer, if not a deeper, pathos; they have at least as easy a flow and as perfect an arrangement. . . . Indeed, if I am not wholly mistaken, there will be found among these sonnets models of composition comparable to those of the greatest masters."—*Rev. Derwent Coleridge.*

This is just criticism. If Hartley Coleridge retains a permanent place amongst our poets, it will be as a writer of sonnets. His genius is unquestionable, but his power is not great, and sweetness and tenderness are more evident in his poems than strength. Within the narrow limits of the sonnet, however, he is never weak, never careless, and the passionate emotion which has prompted many of these pieces is accompanied by a perfect mastery of form.

WILLIAM C.
ROSCOE.

Pp. 180-184.

These sonnets were not published in the author's lifetime, and therefore did not receive his final revision. This will account for some slight defects of composition which detract a little from the charm of these delicately beautiful poems. The sonnet quoted upon page 184 forms the epilogue to Mr. Roscoe's *Tragedy of "Violenzia,"* a drama of high purpose and admirable execution, which deserves a larger recognition from the public than it appears yet to have received. The comparative neglect of the poem is probably owing to its plot, which may offend modern taste notwithstanding the refined manner in which an unpleasant subject is handled. Mr. R. H. Hutton in his beautiful *Memoir* of the author, writes "I do not think that any drama, except Mr. Kingsley's *Saint's Tragedy* which has appeared since the publication of Shelley's *Cenci*, is worthy to be compared to it in power and beauty," and the reader fresh from the perusal of this noble tragedy will not think this judgment too favourable.

JULIAN
FANE.

Pp. 185-189.

The Hon. Julian Fane, whose brilliant career has been so beautifully and affectionately recorded by his friend the Hon. Robert Lytton (now Lord Lytton), was more remarkable for versatility of culture than for originality of genius. He was a poet, a musician, a linguist, a diplomatist, an eloquent speaker, a wit, a mimic, a delightful talker; with a heart as noble as his intellect was commanding, and according to his biographer, "the most graceful and accomplished gentleman of the generation he adorned." From earliest youth to the latest year of his life Fane welcomed his mother's birthday with a song, and the best of these annual effusions took the form of the sonnet. "Many of them," says Mr. Lytton, "were sonnets in the form of which Shakespeare made such wonderful use, and which later English poets have so little employed, that, in the range of modern poetry, few happier examples of it exist than Julian

JULIAN
FANE.
Continued.

Fane's. He made of it, as the great master had done, a key to unlock his heart." Again, writing of the Sonnet and of his friend's success in this form of verse, he says: "The number of those poets who have succeeded in the composition of it is exceedingly small, belonging to the first rank only; and even here the differences are great. Masterly as are the sonnets of Milton, Wordsworth, or Keats, those of Shakespeare have a peculiar poetical physiology which places them quite apart, constituting a separate group, related to, but essentially differing from, all the others. Turning away from the more ordinary form, Julian Fane went back to this of Shakespeare; he loved and studied Shakespeare's sonnets till he became saturated with the spirit of them." It must, we think, be added that the results of this study, beautiful and valuable as they are, show how even in his best verse and in uttering his deepest feelings the genius of Fane forced him to be imitative. The two fine sonnets dated 1870, possess a singular interest. "On the evening of the 12th of March," writes the biographer, "his physical suffering was excessive. The following day was the birthday of his mother. That day had never yet dawned upon a deeper sorrow than it now reawakened in the soul of her he loved so well. For the first time in all the long course of their tender intercourse she could not look forward to that accustomed and treasured tribute of dedicated song wherewith her son had never yet failed to honour the advent of this day. Yet she found what she dared not, could not, anticipate. There lay upon her table, when she rose on that saddest of all her birthday anniversaries, a letter in the old beloved handwriting; which with a few simple utterances of devoted affection, contained the two following sonnets. They are the last words ever written by Julian Fane."

Q

DAVID
GRAY.

Pp. 190—193.

David Gray's name has not been "traced in sand." His short life was long enough to win much affection and appreciation, and after death his memory has been tenderly cherished by sympathising friends. Mr. Milnes (now Lord Houghton) who befriended the young poet in the wisest and most practical manner, when counsel and direction were the most needed, writes of him with discriminative praise, believing there was in him the making of a great man, and it is scarcely too much to say that Mr. Buchanan's monograph of his friend is one of the most affecting and beautiful chapters in modern literature. It is painful to listen to the young poet's passionate cry after life as it was slipping from him, and to note his eager, boy-like ambition to gain a name in poetry before death took him. He was so young, so full of hope and aspiration, of confidence in his own powers, and of exultation in life, that we read of the slow and sure destruction of his hopes with infinite sorrow. The reality of his verse is perhaps its most characteristic feature; the inmost soul of the writer is uttered out in his sonnets, and they are alone sufficient to preserve the memory of "the hand-loom weaver's son." We are glad to hear that Mr. Maclehose, to whose courtesy we are indebted for permission to print these sonnets, is about to publish a new edition of Gray's poems.

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